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Who was Britain's greatest PRIME MINISTER?

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The Neanderthal in the mirror

A year in the life of the British empire

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WELCOME

APRIL 2021

"It was 300 years ago this month that King George I appointed **Robert Walpole** as First Lord of the Treasury and chancellor of the Exchequer – positions he would retain for more than 20 years. Historians now see this as the beginnings of the office of prime minister, and Walpole as the first in a long line of incumbents stretching forward until Boris Johnson today. On the 300th anniversary of Walpole's appointment, we've asked a group of political historians to compile a list of the **10 most accomplished prime ministers** so far – you'll find their choices on page 28. No doubt you'll have your own views about this selection, so please do write in with your thoughts.

While Walpole began a political dynasty, this month's cover star saw hers come to an end. As Joyce Tyldesley reveals in her article, **Cleopatra VII's entanglements with Roman rulers** brought her great power and influence, but ultimately led to her downfall and Egypt's incorporation into the Roman empire. Turn to page 20 for that.

The next few days will see the latest census taking place for most of the UK (Scotland's has been delayed until 2022). These censuses, which first began in 1801, ultimately become invaluable resources for historians and genealogists. To mark the occasion, we asked Boris Starling and David Bradbury to tell **the story of modern Britain in numbers**, drawing out statistics that offer insights into the changes of recent decades. The only number you'll need for that is page 60.

Rob Attar
Editor

THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS

Alan Lester
I co-wrote *Ruling the World* as Black Lives Matter protesters were highlighting the British empire's racism. I wanted to see what the ideals of the men who actually governed the empire were.
Alan tells the story of the men who ran the British empire on page 42

Joyce Tyldesley
Cleopatra was the acceptable enemy who allowed Octavian to eliminate his rival Mark Antony. I am fascinated by the effect that her actions had on the development of the Roman empire.
Joyce chronicles Cleopatra's entanglements with three leading Romans on page 20

Shrabani Basu
I love hidden stories about Asians in Britain through history – that's what I do as a journalist. And I'm also a great Arthur Conan Doyle fan. This strange criminal case brought both of those strands together.
Shrabani discusses a miscarriage of justice investigated by the creator of Sherlock Holmes on page 78

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COVER: BUST BELIEVED TO BE CLEOPATRA (IMAGE MODIFIED FOR COVER) – AKG-IMAGES, EXTRA WORK BY JOHN GALLAGHER. BACKGROUND: DREAMSTIME.CLEMENT ATTLEE, MARGARET THATCHER, WILLIAM PITT THE YOUNGER: GETTY IMAGES. THIS PAGE: STEVE SAYERS/FRAN MONKS

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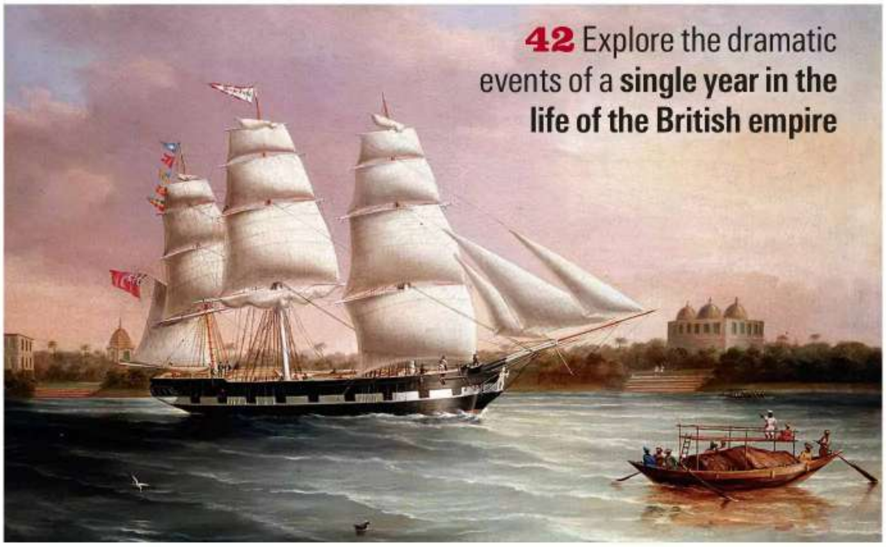

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AKG/FRAN MONKS/ALAMY/GETTY/TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

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THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

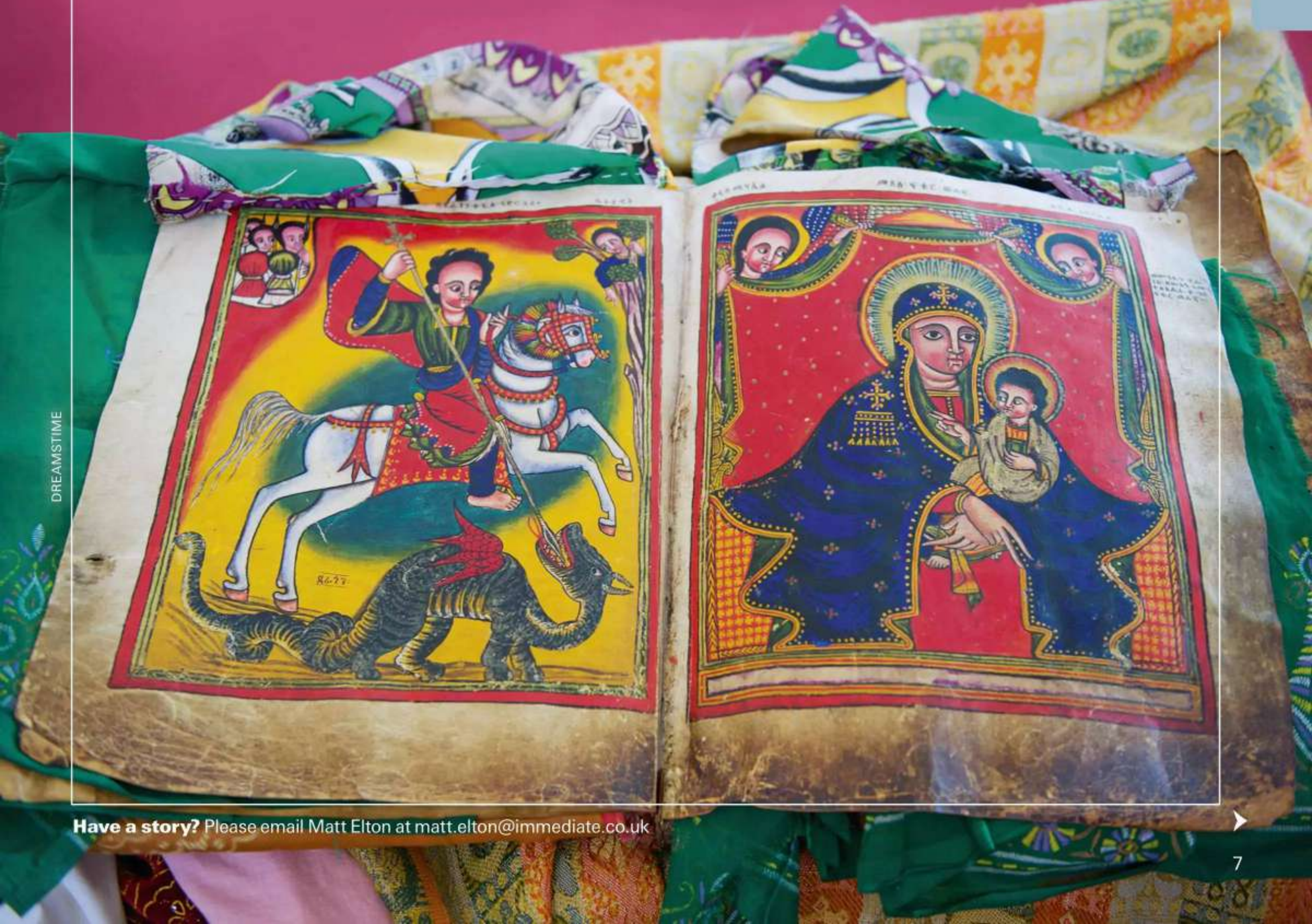
EYE-OPENER

Heritage at risk

This ancient illustrated Bible, featuring lavish depictions of sacred scenes and written in the Amharic language, is stored in the Church of Our Lady Mary of Zion in the Ethiopian city of Aksum. It's among the artefacts at risk as war continues to rage throughout the Tigray region, in the north of the country.

The conflict, between the regional government and federal troops, began in November. Shelling has taken place in towns and cities elsewhere in the region, including Mekelle, Humera and Shire. In February, international non-governmental organisation Human Rights Watch reported forces heading towards Aksum.

The town is also of particular interest as the rumoured home of the Ark of the Covenant – the wooden casket said to hold the stone tablets upon which the Ten Commandments were inscribed. However, the whereabouts of such an artefact have never been proved.



DREAMSTIME

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TALKING POINTS

Hidden in plain sight?

Is "Hidden histories" a benign phrase, or one that disguises the reality of whose voices have been heard throughout past centuries? **ANNA WHITELOCK** watched the debate unfold

Sometimes a Twitter user will pose a question that goes on to strike a chord with fellow social networkers. So it proved when Leeds Museums curator **Lucy Moore** (@curatorlucy) asked: "Pals. I hate the term 'hidden histories' increasingly and would much prefer 'stories we discriminate(d) against… I bet I'm not alone? Or… is it good? Am I grumpy?"

Among those sharing their thoughts was **Alice A Procter** (@aaprocter), who tweeted that "I have had so many rants about this. I've generally settled on 'excluded' rather than 'hidden'." **Natalie Harrower** (@natalieharrower) also favoured "excluded", "as in 'excluded from dominant narratives'", while "marginalised voices" was the term that **Georgia Grainger** (@sniphist) used in her work on oral and feminist history. While agreeing, **Ewan** (@ewandwhoelse) made the interesting point that "the problem with using loaded language is that you can push people away that you otherwise want to reach and persuade". As @curatorlucy replied: "I wonder how often things called 'hidden' do persuade people in?" It does sound, as @ewandwhoelse added, "more provocative and interesting".

Petra Seitz (@Pooski_pie) also saw the merits of the phrase "hidden histories": "It makes it really easy to talk about the 'hiding' of these histories – making clear that their obscurity is part of an active process." Curator **Ben Paites** (@BenPaites) agreed: "We have recently been consulting for a display on west African medieval gold, and the west African people that we're working with loved the idea of 'hidden' histories because it meant they were always there – they're not new."

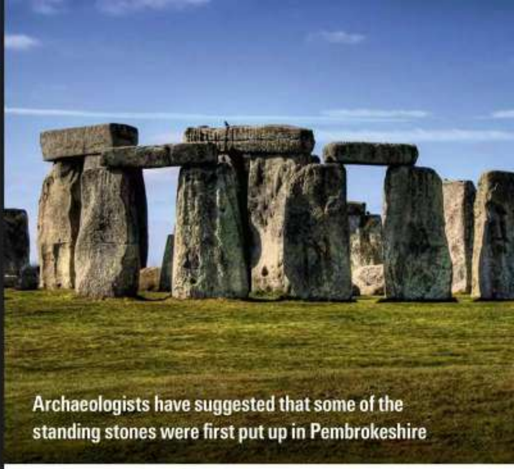
Gillian Couper (@gillian_couper) saw both sides, writing that "[using] 'hidden' helps us all politely avoid our complicity, by providing a reason for us not to have noticed? It might also intrigue people in though, to learn [or] discover more?" **Dinah Winch** (@DinahSW), however, found "hidden" problematic: "I really dislike it for lots of reasons, mostly because it lets people off the hook. If the history has been 'hidden' then people have an excuse for not having seen it."

Similarly convinced was **Kink Lear** (@elaffleck), who wrote: "I don't like it, and have moved away from using it (in the context of LGBTQIA+ histories) because it doesn't make clear the mechanics of why these stories have been in many cases actively obscured, and why and how that happened. It neutralises the politics."

Sacha Coward (@sacha_coward) liked "unfound histories", as "it puts the onus on research. It also asserts that the stories exist, they're real, they just need to be brought to light." But **François Matarasso** (@arestlessart) noted: "It depends who's doing the hiding and why: it can be an act of self-protection or even resistance. Things are not one way." And so it went on. It was and will remain a lively and thoughtful debate, which reveals much about the richness of current historical research. **H**

Join the debate at **twitter.com/historyextra**

Leaders of the US civil rights movement in Maryland, 1963. Twitter users debated the reasons that some historical stories are told, while others remain obscured



Archaeologists have suggested that some of the standing stones were first put up in Pembrokeshire

ARCHAEOLOGY

Stonehenge "first erected in Wales"

From the origin of its massive standing stones to plans to construct a road near its site in Wiltshire, Stonehenge has repeatedly made headlines in recent months. Now a new discovery has raised a question linked to both of those issues – was the ancient stone circle, in fact, originally built somewhere else?

That's the suggestion of a team of archaeologists working at a site in the Preseli Hills in Pembrokeshire, Wales. They have uncovered the remains of a huge stone circle whose diameter – 110 metres – is exactly the same as that of the ditch surrounding Stonehenge. And that's not all: the Waun Mawn circle is also aligned to frame the sunrise on the midsummer solstice, and a hole at the site matches the unusual cross-section of one of Stonehenge's "bluestones".

Although experts knew that some of Stonehenge's stones were transported from Pembrokeshire, the new research implies, for the first time, that parts of the monument had originally been constructed at Waun Mawn before being dismantled and brought to Wiltshire. Because only a few of the stones can be traced directly back to Waun Mawn, it's likely that Stonehenge comprises stones drawn from a number of monuments. How and why this was achieved is unclear, but the remains of a cow found at the Preseli Hills site suggest animals might have been used to transport the stones to England. **H**

➤➤ Turn to page 13 to read Michael Wood's column on Stonehenge

WATCH The discovery is explored in the BBC Two documentary **Stonehenge: The Lost Circle Revealed**, available now on BBC iPlayer

GETTY IMAGES/DREAMSTIME

HISTORY IN THE NEWS

A selection of the stories hitting the **history headlines**

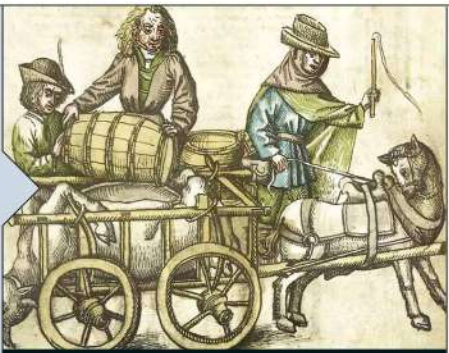
Skeletons reveal the deadly dangers of medieval work

The realities of life and death in Cambridge across more than four centuries have been highlighted in often gruesome detail by a new study of remains interred in the city.

The project team used X-ray analysis to uncover the injuries suffered by more than 300 individuals between the 10th and 14th centuries. They discovered that fractured bones were commonest among people buried in a parish graveyard – All Saints by the Castle – who were most likely to be workers. But almost a third of the clergy buried at an Augustinian friary also showed evidence of fractured bones. Indeed, the most devastating injuries were found on the skeleton of a friar, who experts think broke both his thigh bones in a cart accident. The remains of another bore signs of a physical assault, including blunt trauma to his skull and fractures to his arms.

The results suggest that some degree of trauma was endemic right across society in the medieval period.

MORE FROM US Listen to Dr Jenna Dittmar **discuss the findings** at *historyextra.com/podcast*



A medieval depiction of a cart – one of the causes of death uncovered in a study of Cambridge skeletons

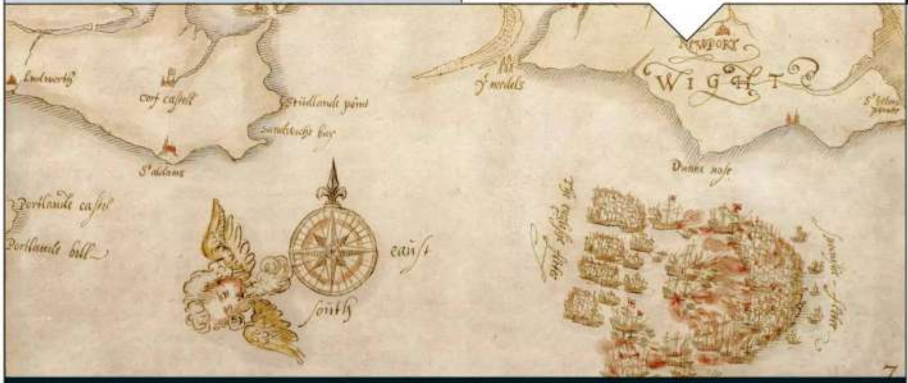
Armada maps set to stay in UK

A set of hand-drawn maps depicting the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 will remain in Britain after the National Museum of the Royal Navy in Portsmouth raised the £600,000 required to buy them. The 10 charts had been sold to an overseas buyer before the UK culture minister imposed an export ban last summer. They were created a year after the naval victory, making them the earliest surviving visual depictions of the battle. It's now hoped they will go on display – if further funds can be raised.

Experts discover "biblical dye"

Archaeologists in Israel have uncovered material coloured with a purple dye mentioned in both the Christian and Hebrew Bibles. The shade, known as "royal" or "Tyrian" purple, was found on fabric at a site in Timna, north of Eilat. It's thought to date from around 1000 BC, which corresponds to the supposed dates of the biblical kings David and Solomon. The Bible describes both men as wearing garments dyed with the substance – said to have been more valuable than gold.

Fabric dyed with "royal purple", thought to have been derived from a gland found in three mollusc species



One of 10 ink-and-watercolour maps depicting the 1588 defeat of the Spanish Armada, now set to remain in the UK

Miner memorial gets go-ahead

The construction of a memorial marking the historical contribution of miners around the UK has been confirmed after fundraisers neared their target of £100,000.

The monument, to be built at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire, will feature a bronze frieze charting the history of mining, including the contributions that colliers made to the two world wars. Although it's due to be completed by May, the ongoing coronavirus pandemic means it won't be unveiled until the autumn. **H**

This shell was decorated with a pigment also used to paint the walls of the cave in which it was found

Conch shell is "earliest known instrument of its type"

Analysis of an 18,000-year-old shell found in a cave in the Pyrenees in 1931 has revealed it to be a wind instrument – making it the earliest known device of its type. Although experts previously believed the conch shell was used as a communal drinking vessel, closer inspection showed that it had been shaped and drilled, likely to enable a tube to be attached. A professional musician was even able to produce three distinct notes using the instrument – C, C sharp and D.

Miners in Geevor tin mine, Cornwall, 1933. A new memorial will honour colliery workers around the UK

ALAMY/ISRAEL ANTIQUITIES AUTHORITY/NMRM/MUSÉUM D'HISTOIRE NATURELLE DE TOULOUSE

The fight for free school meals

Recent calls to provide free meals for impoverished schoolchildren have reignited a debate that has raged for decades in Britain. **ANNIE GRAY** considers why these state-funded lunches have caused such consternation, from monotonous menus to the ever-present threat of cost-cutting

Free school meals are back in the news. In January, footballer and children's welfare campaigner Marcus Rashford called for a full review of school meals provision, stating: "It seems like we have taken steps forward, but in my mind, we've got a million miles still to go."

Last year his petition to extend free school meals provision into the school holidays garnered 1.1 million signatures, prompting the government to reverse policy. It reignited the ever-simmering debate over free school meals, fuelled, latterly, by figures from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation forecasting that, if the government ends as planned the current £20 top-up to universal credit, another 200,000 children will be plunged into poverty. This is in addition to the 550,000 children already living in poverty prior to Covid-19.

The roots of the current school meals system lie in the mid-19th century. At the time the prevailing doctrine was that charity increased dependence and that the feckless poor needed to be motivated into working – hence the notorious starvation rations of prisons and workhouses. Scandals such as that at Andover workhouse, where inmates were reduced to eating the marrow from rotten bones (including, it was rumoured, from human corpses), together with a more humanist approach exemplified by Charles Dickens, led gradually to a change in attitude. Hunger was reframed as a social issue, rather than inevitably the fault of those who suffered from it.

Starving children were a more sympathetic cause for campaigners to raise funds for than adults. In Manchester, independent charities as well as official bodies started to provide free meals for undernourished children in the 1870s. When education became compulsory in the following decades, the extent of the issue became apparent. Proponents of feeding starving children pointed out that it was due to government mandate that children were in school, not working and contributing to the family food budget, so the government should pay. Their opponents disputed this, saying that it was not the government's responsibility to make up for parental shortcomings.

From the 1890s onwards, poverty was increasingly problematised. Social reformers such as Seebohm Rowntree and Charles Booth provided robust statistics, showing that around 30 per cent of the population in London and

SAVE OUR SCHOOL DINNERS
You're cutting whose wages?
GMBATU
Save School Meals
School Meals

Passionate protesters Representatives from the "save our school meals" campaign in 1983. At the time, many were deeply worried by the Conservative government's cuts to school dinners

Famous campaigner The footballer Marcus Rashford has pressed for children from struggling families to be given free school meals, relighting a decades-old debate

MARY EVANS/GETTY IMAGES

AMERICAN
W.V.S

Mixed reception
Boys at Epsom Central School are served school meals in 1942. The Second World War saw an increased emphasis on feeding Britain's children

York lived below the poverty line. Then came the shock of the Boer War, and the stark fact that a third of volunteers had to be turned away on health grounds, with substandard diet often a key factor.

War, as ever, was a driver for change. An Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration recommended compulsory domestic science teaching (for girls) and free school meals for all in need. In 1906 an act was passed enabling rates to be levied to provide free school meals for "those unable by lack of food to take advantage of the education provided them". The link between undernourishment and lack of educational attainment was made explicit. And young, fit bodies were needed to fight and die for the nation.

Hot dripping on toast

In Bradford, the city council introduced free school meals in the early 1900s. Central kitchens provided breakfasts including bread, jam, cocoa and porridge. A sample dinner in 1912 was fish and potato pie, peas and parsley sauce, followed by rice [pudding] and sultanas. Tablecloths, cutlery and flowers added to the middle-class vibe.

Reception was mixed. Then, as now, children rejected foods they weren't used to, preferring white bread with treacle, fish and chips, shellfish and other working-class staples. But inculcating middle-class values was, and for a long time remained, part of the ethos of a school meal system imposed from above.

The First World War and subsequent increased understanding of nutrition led to changes in the way malnutrition was viewed. Now, it was recognised that undernutrition was only one part of malnutrition: someone could be overweight and malnourished if their diet was deficient.

Much-hated physical examinations were the standard test for eligibility for free school meals, but inspectors only compared bodies within their regions, which led to wildly differing standards. What was normal for one area might be severely underweight for another. New arguments came to the fore: how should eligibility be determined? How could the government encourage take up, when free school meals carried the stigma of poverty? What did a nutritionally balanced meal look like, and how could children be encouraged to eat it when it didn't exactly excite the appetite versus hot dripping on toast?

Again, war changed the terms of the debate. Lord Woolton, minister of food in the 1940s, declared children in state schools should be as well-fed as those at Eton, aiming for a 75 per cent take-up of school meals. Meals for those not eligible for free provision would still be subsidised, and, with everyone eating the same food, some of the stigma surrounding the school meal system might be resolved. The Ministry of Works collaborated with the Board of Education to promote a range of pre-fabricated canteens and kitchens, though in reality most eating

> **Following workhouse scandals and the work of Charles Dickens, hunger was reframed as a social issue, not inevitably the fault of those who suffered from it**

GETTY IMAGES

En masse eating
Children pose with their meals at a school in Bradford, c1907. The city council introduced free school meals for pupils from the early 1900s

STEPHEN GOODFELLOW-SCIENCE MUSEUM GROUP COLLECTION

took place in dual-function gyms or assembly halls.

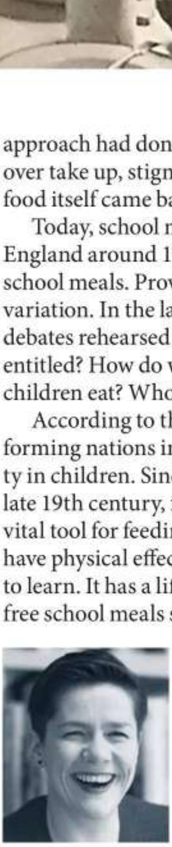
By 1968, 70 per cent of children were fed at school, of whom 12 per cent were eligible for free meals. Only children who could go home for lunch avoided school dinners. Means testing had replaced physical examinations, and menus had been rewritten around a set of dietary guidelines. But finding the balance between cheap and good proved elusive. Diaries of the time talk of "little bags of mystery" (sausages), watery custard and stodgy suet puddings. Some children were put off brassicas for life. The chief medical officer bemoaned the "monotony of hash, stew and soup, which in addition to being monotonous are often deficient even in calorie value, and deficient in just those elements of a well-balanced diet which a necessitous child does not get at home, such as milk, cheese, eggs, green vegetables, fruit and meat".

Just as take-up of school meals peaked in 1980, the Tory government, desperate to cut costs, made provision largely optional and abolished nutritional standards. Over the next 15 years school catering services were dismantled, and convenience and cost became paramount. One senior catering advisor to the Department of Education remarked that "it could truly be said that the schools' meals service changed almost overnight from a social service to a quasi-commercial catering operation". By the mid-1990s it was evident that this approach had done huge damage, and all of the debates over take up, stigmatisation, eligibility, standards and the food itself came back with full force.

Today, school meals provision is linked to benefits: in England around 17 per cent of children are entitled to free school meals. Provision is outsourced, leading to huge variation. In the last year, we've seen all of the age-old debates rehearsed once more. How do we decide who is entitled? How do we guarantee quality? Who decides what children eat? Who pays?

According to the UN, Britain is among the worst-performing nations in Europe when it comes to food insecurity in children. Since their piecemeal introduction in the late 19th century, free school meals have been regarded as a vital tool for feeding children. Undernutrition does not just have physical effects, but also affects behaviour and ability to learn. It has a lifelong impact. The arguments around free school meals seem never to end. But they are hugely important and, until poverty is eradicated, they will not and should not go away. **H**

> **" Finding the balance between cheap and good proved elusive: it was a time of 'mystery' sausages, watery custard and stodgy suet puddings "**



Annie Gray is a food historian, author and broadcaster. Her latest book is *Victory in the Kitchen: The Life of Churchill's Cook* (Profile Books, 2020)

WATCH Tune in to the BBC documentary **Marcus Rashford: Feeding Britain's Children**, available on iPlayer. *bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000qq41*

BBC one

MICHAEL WOOD ON...
REIMAGINING OUR ANCIENT PAST

"These latest ideas show how much we don't know about Stonehenge"

Not long ago, I was strolling in the rain around the old Song-dynasty capital of Kaifeng, China, one of my favourite historical townscapes. There, in a wooded park, I came across a small Ming-dynasty temple to Da Yu (Yu the Great), the legendary founder of Chinese kingship in around 2000 BC. As rain pattered on the roof, the temple custodian recounted the famous myth describing how Yu restored China after a great flood, assisted by supernatural companions, "Yellow Dragon, who used his long, powerful tail to create water channels, and Black Turtle, who pushed the river mud with his huge flippers to build up the dykes".

Of course, flood legends abound in many cultures. This one had been thought to date from the Han dynasty, overlapping with the Roman period. Recently, though, a bronze tureen dating from 900 BC was discovered, bearing an inscription recounting the story of King Yu. And in 2016, Chinese archaeologists discovered evidence that the gorge named in that ancient myth had once been blocked by an earthquake, and that the Yellow river had then burst out and flooded the plain below. That flood occurred around 1900 BC – matching the time frame of the legend.

Historians are taught to rely on written source material; oral tradition is usually frowned on. But the more I travel, the more I think that traditional societies can pass down narratives over huge spans of time. A friend once recalled how, during her 1940s childhood in Baghdad, the family's old gatekeeper – an illiterate man from southern Iraq, the land of the ancient Sumerians – told wonderful stories to spellbound kids. Much later, when she became a cuneiform scholar, she realised that his tales had been part of the Gilgamesh cycle, set in the third millennium BC.

Which brings me to the extraordinary discoveries about Stonehenge. It's long been known that the monument's smaller "bluestones" were brought from Wales. Now, Professor Mike Parker Pearson of UCL suggests that they were first set up close to quarries in the Preseli Hills in Pembrokeshire around 3400–3300 BC, centuries before being transported to Wiltshire. This daring theory (explored in a BBC Two documentary) recalls the tale, written by Geoffrey of Monmouth in the 12th century, of how a giant helped Merlin the magician to load the stones onto boats in Ireland to sail them to Britain. A distant oral tradition?

Stonehenge must have been a massive communal effort – perhaps it was a unifying project ordered by a powerful "state" in southern Britain? It has even been suggested that the five huge trilithons symbolise five tribal groupings descended from five great ancestors. Perhaps their mythic ancestral homeland was in the Preseli Hills? Or was the shrine there deliberately dismantled by later conquerors? Needless to say these are as yet fascinating speculations.

Parallels with megalithic sites overseas suggest that Stonehenge was a huge open-air circular altar where astronomical phenomena were observed; where the living spoke to the ancestors; where the underworld, the land of the living and the heavens were connected. These ideas show how much we don't know – and how new finds can change the picture, as with the discovery last year of pits around Durrington Walls suggesting a Neolithic circle.

All of which brings us to the current furore over the plan to divert the A303, the main road that currently runs alongside Stonehenge, through a new tunnel in order to ease traffic congestion. The huge tunnel entrances would sit wholly within the designated World Heritage Site, and well within the wider prehistoric sacred landscape. English Heritage and the National Trust welcomed the scheme, however, expert opinion (notably the Council for British Archaeology, the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, and the 22 Stonehenge specialists who made a collective representation to the Examining Authority) broadly opposes it, and the Examining Authority advised the government to withhold consent. The slender time savings promised depend on seven further improvement schemes along the A303/A30 corridor; in reality, the tunnel will simply shift the intermittent traffic jams a bit further down the road. Nonetheless, the project has been given the go-ahead.

Discussed for decades, the tunnel now looks like an idea from another age. More importantly, in my view, it is fundamentally flawed in its conception of what constitutes a historical landscape. The more we discover about Stonehenge, the more we realise that the heritage site is not just the stones and their immediate surrounds but their entire setting. Stonehenge is our greatest historical landscape. To proceed with the plan, against expert advice, would risk losing untold ancient evidence. That would be not only a misfortune, as Lady Bracknell might say – it would look like carelessness. H

ILLUSTRATION BY **FEMKE DE JONG**

Michael Wood is professor of public history at the University of Manchester. He has presented numerous BBC series and his latest book is *The Story of China* (Simon & Schuster, 2020). His twitter handle is @mayavision

ANNIVERSARIES

DOMINIC SANDBROOK highlights events that took place in April in history

24 APRIL 1792

War-torn France is spurred by song

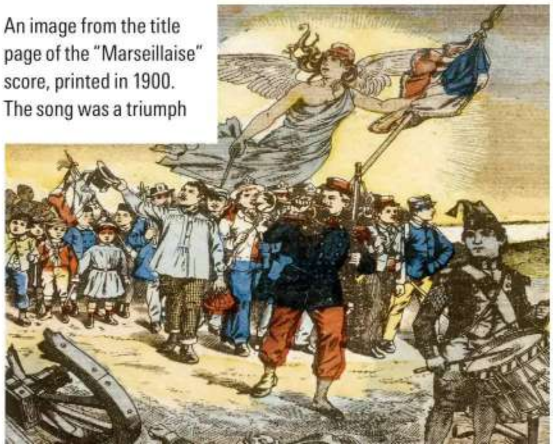
The "Marseillaise" inspires the revolutionary nation to fight another day

In the late spring of 1792, revolutionary France had declared war on Austria. A coalition of enemies would soon be at the country's frontiers, and thousands of men were marching to battle.

In Strasbourg, two men were having dinner at the local Masonic lodge, a magnet for reformers and free thinkers. One was the city's mayor, Baron de Dietrich. The other was an officer in the local corps of military engineers, one Claude-Joseph Rouget de Lisle. Their talk turned to the best way to inspire the troops in France's hour of need, and the mayor had an idea. "Mr de Lisle, write us a song that will rally our soldiers to defend their homeland," he said, "and you will have won the nation."

That night, Rouget de Lisle set to work. The result was the "War Song for the Army of the Rhine", better known today as the "Marseillaise". And given the circumstances, the words are understandably pretty bloodthirsty: "Arise, children of the Fatherland, / The day of glory has arrived /... Let's march, let's march! / Let an impure blood / Water our furrows..."

It was, of course, a triumph. As the writer Stefan Zweig later put it: "For one night, it was granted to... Rouget de Lisle to be a brother of the immortals. Out of the opening of the song, taken from the street and the newspapers, creative words form at his command and rise into a verse that, in its poetic expression, is as abiding as the melody is immortal."



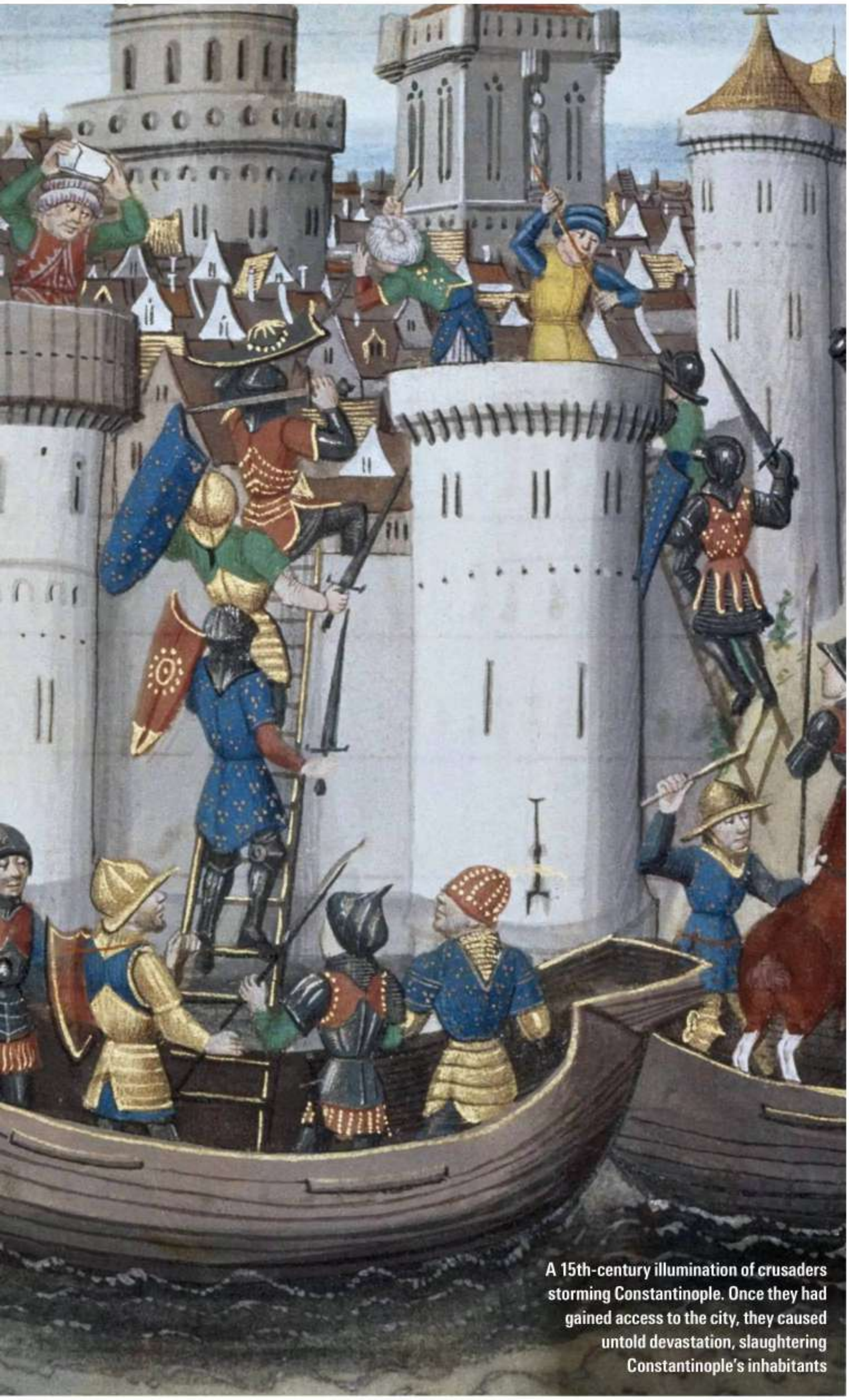
An image from the title page of the "Marseillaise" score, printed in 1900. The song was a triumph

ALAMY/AKG-IMAGES

Maria Theresa, c1727. The Pragmatic Sanction meant her father's lands could pass to her after his death

19 APRIL 1713

With no clear male heir, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI issues the Pragmatic Sanction so his lands can pass to a woman. He's succeeded by his daughter **Maria Theresa** in 1740 – though she still has to fight against her neighbours first.



A 15th-century illumination of crusaders storming Constantinople. Once they had gained access to the city, they caused untold devastation, slaughtering Constantinople's inhabitants

13 APRIL 1204

Crusaders devastate Constantinople

Christian armies smash, steal and slaughter

Have the wounds from the Fourth Crusade's sack of Constantinople ever healed? It might sound a strange question, but ever since the crusaders burst into the Byzantine capital, relations between the Latin and Orthodox worlds have never been the same.

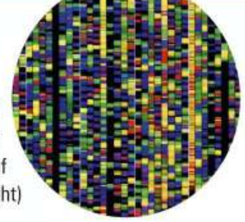
It was, from start to finish, a ghastly story. Called by Pope Innocent III, the Fourth Crusade was supposed to capture Jerusalem. Before the crusaders had even left Europe, however, they were unable to pay for the extravagant Venetian fleet they had ordered. The Venetian doge, Enrico Dandolo, promised to suspend their debts and offer them funds – if they would help take the city of Zara (Zadar). This diversion eventually led the crusaders to Constantinople, one of Venice's chief commercial rivals.

Here, after a series of immensely complicated machinations, the crusaders agreed to install the future Alexios IV on the throne, in return for thousands of soldiers and 200,000 silver marks. Alexios duly took power but was eventually toppled by a rival, Alexios V. The crusaders demanded their money anyway. The second Alexios said no – and so they decided to seize the city, with all its treasures, for themselves.

For three days, having scaled the walls and fought their way into the centre, the crusaders ran riot. The altars were shattered, the nuns violated, the townsfolk slaughtered without mercy. Many priceless artworks were destroyed; others were taken, like the bronze horses which stand in Venice today.

"No one was without a share in the grief," wrote the Byzantine official Nicetas Choniates, recalling the sound of "weeping, lamentations, grief, the groaning of men, the shrieks of women, wounds, rape, captivity… All places everywhere were filled full of all kinds of crime."

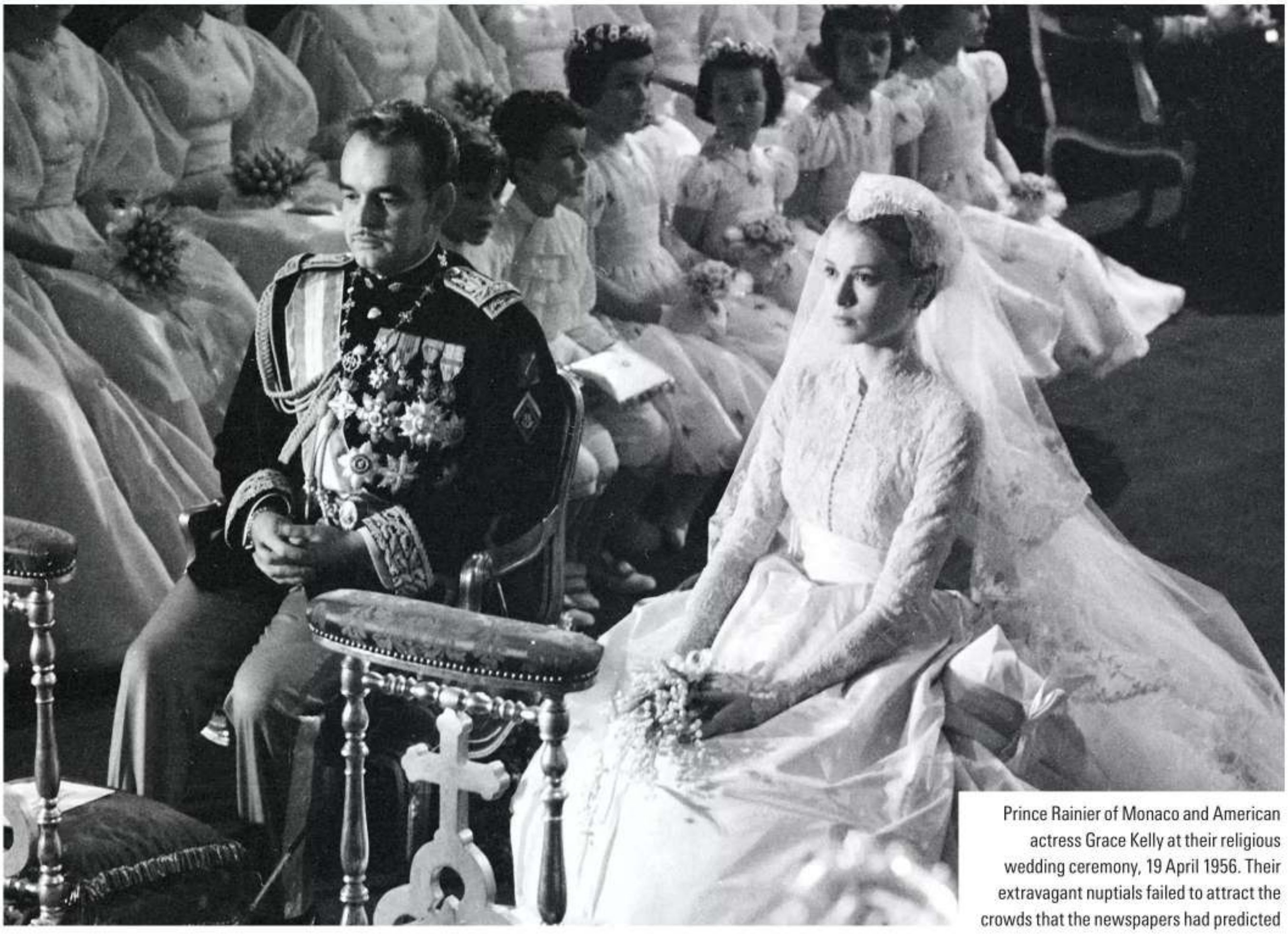
The city – and indeed the empire – never recovered.



Scientists have mapped every gene of the human genetic code (part of which is shown right)

14 APRIL 2003

After more than a decade, 20 worldwide institutions complete their work on the Human Genome Project, mapping all the genes of the human genome, sequenced to an accuracy of 99.99 per cent. It is still seen as the greatest achievement in the history of genetics.



Prince Rainier of Monaco and American actress Grace Kelly at their religious wedding ceremony, 19 April 1956. Their extravagant nuptials failed to attract the crowds that the newspapers had predicted

19 APRIL 1956

Grace Kelly weds the prince of Monaco

The film-star enjoys two sumptuous ceremonies – but her reception is lukewarm

It was the ultimate fairytale wedding, so exciting they held it twice. For the Hollywood film-star Grace Kelly and her new husband, Prince Rainier of Monaco, one ceremony was not enough. First came the civil ceremony on 18 April 1956. But it was the religious occasion, at Saint Nicholas Cathedral the next day, that really caught the attention of the world's press.

In fairness, it was a terrific story. Waiting at the altar was Rainier III, the dapper, chain-smoking monarch of Monaco, latest representative of the medieval Grimaldi dynasty, now presiding over one of the world's fastest-growing tax havens. And walking down the aisle was one of the most beautiful and accomplished actresses on Earth, Grace Kelly, famous for *High Noon*, *Rear Window* and *Dial M for Murder*. Who could resist?

In most respects the wedding lived up to expectations. The bride – who had only met her husband a year earlier – wore a dress with 800,000 sequins and 1,500 precious stones, and the happy couple's presents included a convertible black-and-cream Rolls-Royce from the people of Monaco. The glitziest gift, though, was a yacht – all 147 feet of it – from the prince's friend Aristotle Onassis.

But although the newspapers were beside themselves with excitement, the new Princess Grace's subjects remained remarkably unmoved. "The promised crowds that were going to swamp Monaco have never appeared," admitted the *Manchester Guardian*. "People did line the streets when, after the ceremony, the prince and princess drove round the town in an open car, but only a few deep… A few grandmothers from Nice or Genoa stood on tea chests, and young American tourists clicked away with cameras, but that was all. The crush was rather worse outside the post offices; these, for one day only, were selling special portrait stamps of the newly married couple. Almost a quiet wedding."

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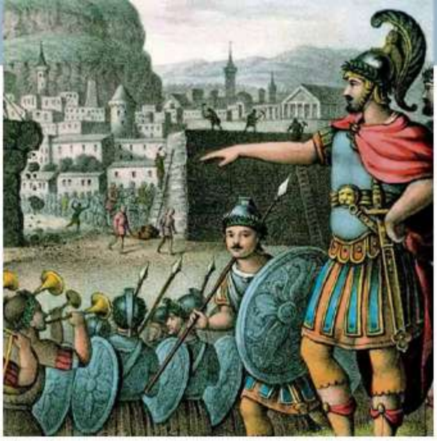
WHY WE SHOULD REMEMBER...



The Spartan commander Lysander (shown right, in this 19th-century lithograph) defeated the Athenians

25 APRIL 404 BC

Athens surrenders to Sparta

The brutal Peloponnesian War comes to a poignant end

The Peloponnesian War, pitting Athens against Sparta, is one of the best-chronicled events in ancient history. For more than 20 years they and their respective allies were locked in bitter conflict, devastating large swathes of the Greek countryside. But at last, in 405 BC, the Spartan commander Lysander virtually annihilated the Athenian fleet.

When news of the defeat reached the city, wrote the historian Xenophon: "The sound of wailing ran from Piraeus through the long walls to the city, one man passing on the news to another; and during that night no one slept, all mourning, not for the lost alone, but far more for their own selves."

For a few months the Athenians tried to hold out. But "without ships, without allies, without provisions, the belief gained hold upon them that there was no way of escape. They must now, in their turn, suffer what they had themselves inflicted upon others."

Eventually, on a date traditionally given as 25 April 404, the Athenians recognised the war was lost. They accepted Lysander's terms that their walls should be demolished and acquiesced to an oligarchic pro-Spartan regime. According to the biographer Plutarch, Lysander then "sent for a number of flute-women out of the city, and collected together all that were in the camp, and pulled down the walls, and burnt the ships to the sound of the flute, the Spartans' allies being crowned with garlands, and making merry together". At long last, it was over. **H**

Dominic Sandbrook co-presents the weekly podcast *The Rest Is History* with historian Tom Holland, available on all platforms

GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY

How a **game of ping-pong thawed US-Sino** relations

BY **RANA MITTER**

Fifty years ago, on 4 April 1971, at the World Table Tennis Championships in Nagoya, Japan, an 18-year-old American named Glenn Cowan got on the tour bus of his Chinese opponents and started chatting with his Chinese counterpart, Zhuang Zedong. Only a friendly encounter, you might think – but this was the height of the Cold War, and the US and China had not had formal relations for over two decades. Just a few days later, after a diplomatic flurry behind the scenes, Cowan and a group of other young Americans were escorted into China. They spent a week looking at the Great Wall, attending a Chinese ballet – and playing table tennis. One player, Tim Boggan, told *The New York Times* that "everything was different from anything I'd ever seen". The stark China of the late Cultural Revolution was a world away from the America of rock music, hippies and Vietnam War protests.

> **"That first ping-pong tour was part of a slow and hesitant dance between the US and China"**

That first ping-pong tour was just one part of a slow and hesitant dance between the US and China as they moved to build up their relationship. Diplomatic relations between the two sides had ended abruptly in 1949, when Mao Zedong's communists took over China. Now there were signs of a thaw.

The most obvious indicator that things had changed was US president Richard Nixon's visit to Beijing in February 1972. Immortalised in John Adams' opera, *Nixon in China*, the president's diplomatic gambit was just the most prominent element of a hesitant opening of relations between the two sides. Two months after Nixon's visit, Zhuang Zedong led a return delegation of Chinese players to the US. American academics and artists followed in the footsteps of the table tennis players during the 1970s, and by 1979, full diplomatic relations had reopened.

Today, relations between the US and China are frosty once more, and some prominent politicians argue that the US was unwise to open up to Beijing in the first place. Yet in reality, a rapprochement at some point was inevitable. Since 1971, sports have continued to play a prominent role in the US-China relationship, above all in the last few Olympics, where the two countries have dominated the medal tables. But that global competition started much more modestly – on a ping-pong table. **H**

Rana Mitter is professor of the history and politics of modern China at the University of Oxford

American ping-pong player Glenn Cowan (right) shakes hands with Chinese counterpart Zhuang Zedong, 4 April 1971. This was a landmark moment for US-Sino relations

LETTERS

A 19th-century image of a young Confederate soldier. Reader Ben Cope traces current US divisions back to the American Civil War

LETTER OF THE MONTH

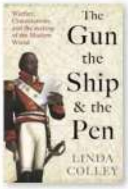
A deadly trade

Malcolm Smith's article *A Hatful of Horrors* (February), which highlighted the use of feathers from exotic birds for the millinery trade of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, was heartbreaking. It happened just a few generations ago and many of us will have had great-grandparents who wore feathered hats or perhaps were some way involved in the colossal trade in wild birds or their plumes.

The image of thousands of ostrich feathers in the Cutler Street warehouses was a stark reminder of the past wrongs inflicted on the natural world by our forefathers. While researching my family history, I discovered that my great-great-grandfather and his son, my great-grandfather, who were merchants, regularly sold feathers from exotic birds at their auctions in the Commercial Sale Rooms in Mincing Lane during the second half of the 19th century. As Malcolm Smith commented, how did they justify the bird killings? I would love to be a time traveller to have that conversation with them.

Although this fashion ended after the First World War, the trade in exotic birds and other wildlife parts sadly still persists in other forms today.

Moira Walshe, Suffolk



We reward the *Letter of the Month* writer with a copy of a new history book. This issue, that is **The Gun, the Ship, and the Pen** by Linda Colley. You can read our review of the book on page 82

A hatful of horrors

The American way?

A New Low for US Democracy? (March) rightly held up a mirror to Americans who were quick to take comfort in their national identity by distancing themselves from the rioters on Capitol Hill [on 6 January] by saying "this is not who we are".

However, I disagree with Adam IP Smith's article, which I believe misunderstands the American psyche. Smith argues that "there has always been a segment of the US population that has yearned for authoritarianism". But surely it is militant libertarianism?

The United States has never forgotten how it was forged with a battle cry of freedom. Their pride in this has coursed through their history. While we now find the Confederacy abhorrent, they fought for a perverse kind of freedom: the freedom to own slaves against northern aggression. Similarly, while we reject those who rioted on Capitol Hill as misled by absurd misinformation, they acted against the lack of freedom of an election they wrongly believed was rigged by a global elite they thought was subjugating them.

Both sides in the Civil War fought for freedom, as do both sides of the culture war now. Failing to appreciate this not only does a disservice to America's rich and complex relationship with its founding principle but drives division in the present.

Ben Cope, Epsom

Roche Abbey in South Yorkshire, of which reader Chris Andrews has fond childhood memories

The spirit of defiance

Lucy Worsley (*Blitz Spirit?*, February) is quite right to criticise "clichéd images of the Blitz" and to question if Britons could really "take it" in 1940 and 1941, but we should beware of drawing simplistic conclusions from her accounts of the bombing horrors. The spirit of defiance was not a falsehood spun by evil propagandists; indeed, my study of Mass Observation reports and foreign newspaper accounts indicates that despite numerous paralysing traumas, there were many acts of selfless civilian bravery. Public morale mostly held together and at no point was Downing Street, parliament, or Buckingham Palace stormed by scared mobs calling for an end to the war as confidently predicted by the interwar prophets of airpower.

Even if an Anglo-American media construct sometimes exaggerated "Blitz spirit", a positive image of plucky Britons carrying on against tremendous hardships was needed for the US, whose ongoing logistical support was of crucial importance for continuing the war.

The wartime media did cooperate with the censors, but it was hardly supine; the *Daily Mirror*, particularly, incurred Churchill's wrath and faced possible closure over its criticism of the war's management.

It would be naive to expect total objectivity from war correspondents during a struggle for national survival – as one said about the Falklands War, "objectivity could come back into fashion when the shooting was over". However, 80 years on, and so far as the Battle of Britain and the Blitz are concerned, many journalists, historians and politicians have still not achieved this.

Anthony J Cumming, Paignton

Abbey memories

I was touched and surprised to see a beautiful photograph of Roche Abbey on the *Contents* page of the February edition. I was born and brought up 70 years ago in the small mining village of Maltby – a leisurely one-mile stroll from Roche Abbey. In those days of few cars and limited public transport, Roche Abbey was a favourite place to visit on a Sunday afternoon.

With a child's lack of knowledge of other ways of life, I assumed everyone had a ruined abbey on their doorstep. It took me around 20 years to realise how very privileged I had been in this respect. My grateful thanks to you for such a wonderful surprise, and also for the fascinating article [on the dissolution of the monasteries] by Hugh Willmott.

Chris Andrews, Doncaster

Denying Jesus

Your report in February's *News* that archaeologists have claimed to have found a home of Jesus has no place in your factual

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS/ALAMY

Milkmen use sledges to complete their rounds in the London district of Forest Hill, 1963. Reader Ian Calder recalls a similar experience in the "great freeze"

magazine. Perhaps you should have suitable, non-biased, experts review the facts of a historical Jesus (in the same way you would of other people you cover in your excellent magazine). You will find the results point to scant, if not zero, evidence.
David Dredge, Kent

Cool runnings

Your review of Juliet Nicolson's *Frostquake* (*Books*, February) reminded me of my own experience of the "great freeze" [of 1962–63]. Our road in Gosport abutted an incline that was the original railway cutting of the railway line to Stokes Bay (as [according to local legend] used by Queen Victoria, no less!). Because of the slope, the Co-op milk float couldn't negotiate the icy surface, so I hired out my sledge (kindly made by dad) to the milkman at 6d a time so he could trundle his crates down to his customers – and very grateful he (and I) was. It still brings back happy memories of that innocent time.
Ian Calder, Hampshire

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ROME GLORIED IN CLEOPATRA'S TALE OF DECADENCE, LUST AND DEATH

Joyce Tyldesley on an Egyptian queen's ill-fated entanglements with three Roman generals

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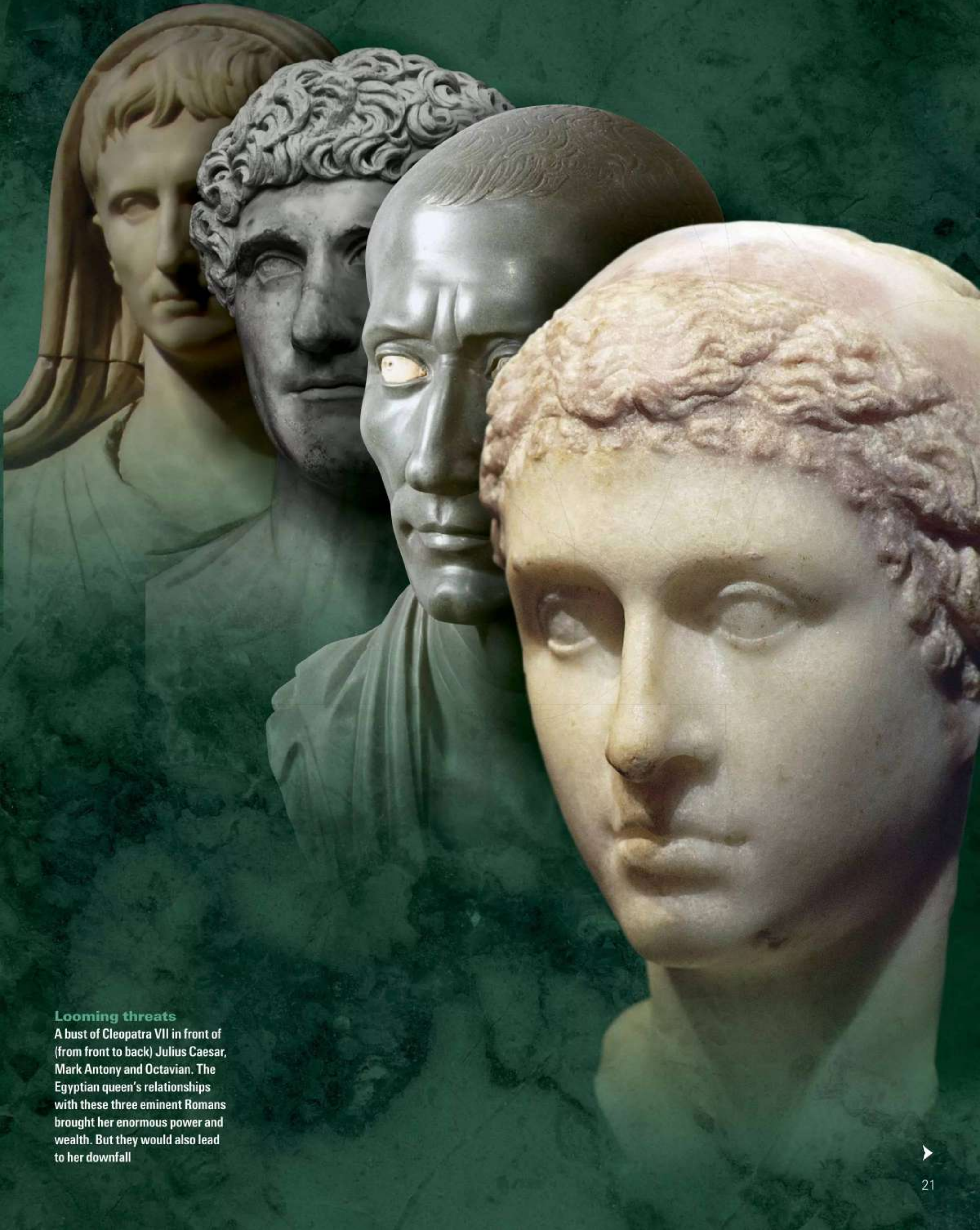


Looming threats
A bust of Cleopatra VII in front of (from front to back) Julius Caesar, Mark Antony and Octavian. The Egyptian queen's relationships with these three eminent Romans brought her enormous power and wealth. But they would also lead to her downfall

It is the autumn of 34 BC and Cleopatra VII, queen of Egypt, is hosting a lavish celebration in her capital city, Alexandria. Seated on a golden throne, wearing flowing robes and an intricate crown decorated with a sun disk and cow horns, she is the living incarnation of the goddess Isis. Beside her sits her consort, the Roman general Mark Antony, dressed as the god Dionysus. Nearby, four lesser thrones have been provided for her son Caesarion – co-ruler of Egypt and, it is rumoured, son of Julius Caesar – and her three children by Antony: the twins Alexander Helios and Cleopatra Selene and the young Ptolemy Philadelphus.

At the climax of the ceremony Antony gives an astonishing speech that makes his ambitions clear. Cleopatra is recognised as queen of Egypt, Caesarion is both king of Egypt and the legitimate heir to Julius Caesar in Rome, and the younger children are destined to rule a vast expanse of lands. Antony, as patriarch, will effectively rule the world. Nothing could have been designed to annoy the watching Romans more.

Rome was never far from Cleopatra's thoughts. And, as a forthcoming film about the Egyptian queen (starring Gal Gadot of *Wonder Woman* fame) is likely to relate, Cleopatra's life was inextricably linked with the dominant power in the Mediterranean world. Her relationships and rivalries with three of Rome's greatest men – Julius Caesar, his great-nephew and heir Octavian (who would go on to become Augustus, Rome's first emperor), and great friend Mark Antony – would bring her immense riches and influence. But they would also bring about her downfall.

It is, perhaps, hardly surprising that Cleopatra became entangled with Rome from an early age. A member of the Ptolemaic dynasty, a family of Macedonian heritage who had inherited Egypt following the death of Alexander the Great, she had seen her father, Ptolemy XII, plunge deep into debt as he bribed influential Romans to protect his crown. The danger was obvious. Egypt was fertile and ill-defended while Rome, ambitious and expanding, was ever-greedy for Egypt's plentiful grain.

When Ptolemy "died of disease" in 51 BC, he appointed the people of Rome guardians to his successors: the 18-year-old Cleopatra and her 10-year-old brother Ptolemy XIII. Ptolemaic tradition dictated that brothers and sisters ruled Egypt jointly, and sometimes married one another (though we're not sure if the latter was the case with Cleopatra and Ptolemy).

The joint reign started with Cleopatra as the dominant monarch and Ptolemy controlled by his advisors and tutors. By the time Ptolemy was old enough to assert his authority, the relationship between the siblings had irretrievably broken down. With civil war looming, Cleopatra raised an army in Syria.

Rome, too, was in crisis.

Julius Caesar had crossed the Rubicon, effectively declaring war on his former ally, the powerful senator and general, Pompey the Great. In August 48 BC, Caesar won the battle of Pharsalus and the defeated Pompey fled to the Egyptian port of Pelusium. Here he found Ptolemy's forces nervously awaiting the arrival of Cleopatra's mercenary army. Wishing to impress Caesar with his loyalty, Ptolemy ordered that Pompey be killed.

Four days later Caesar arrived in Alexandria and Ptolemy's men presented him with Pompey's severed head. Feigning horror – how could a mere Egyptian presume to kill a noble Roman? – he marched into the city. By nightfall he had commandeered the palace; there had been rioting and deaths.

Determined to avert civil war, Caesar summoned Cleopatra and Ptolemy and made it clear that he expected them to rule together in harmony. The poet Lucan, writing c65 AD, tells us that Cleopatra threw a lavish banquet to celebrate this new beginning: "When Caesar had made an expensive peace between the pair, they celebrated with a banquet. With pomp the queen displayed her luxuries, as yet unknown to Roman fashions…"

But Lucan's account needs to be taken with a pinch of salt. In reality no one, Caesar excepted, was happy with the new power-sharing arrangement, and Alexandria was soon plunged into vicious fighting which ended with Ptolemy XIII dead and Cleopatra ruling Egypt alongside a second young brother, Ptolemy XIV. The queen and king were supported by four Roman legions. Egypt was, in all but name, a Roman protectorate.

Suetonius tells us that Caesar was smitten by Cleopatra. "He often feasted with her until daybreak, and they would have sailed together in her barge nearly to Ethiopia had his soldiers agreed to follow him." Some time between 47 and 44 BC Cleopatra gave birth to a son whom she named Ptolemy Caesar (Caesarion). In Rome, opinion was divided over the boy's paternity. In Egypt, no one really cared, although Ptolemy XIV must have started to wonder about his own life expectancy. With Caesarion and Cleopatra ruling Egypt, and Caesar dictator of Rome, Egypt would receive Roman protection, Rome would benefit from Egypt's generosity,

GETTY IMAGES/TOPFOTO/ALAMY

TIMELINE **The rise and fall of Egypt's last pharaoh**

70 or 69 BC

The birth of Cleopatra VII is unrecorded, but Plutarch tells us that at the time of her death (12 August 30 BC) she was 39 years old. Her father is Ptolemy XII; her mother unknown.

A sculpture thought to depict Cleopatra, whose exact date of birth is unknown

51 BC

Ptolemy XII is **succeeded by Cleopatra and her brother** (and perhaps husband) Ptolemy XIII.

Julius Caesar established Rome as the dominant force in Egypt in 47 BC

47 BC

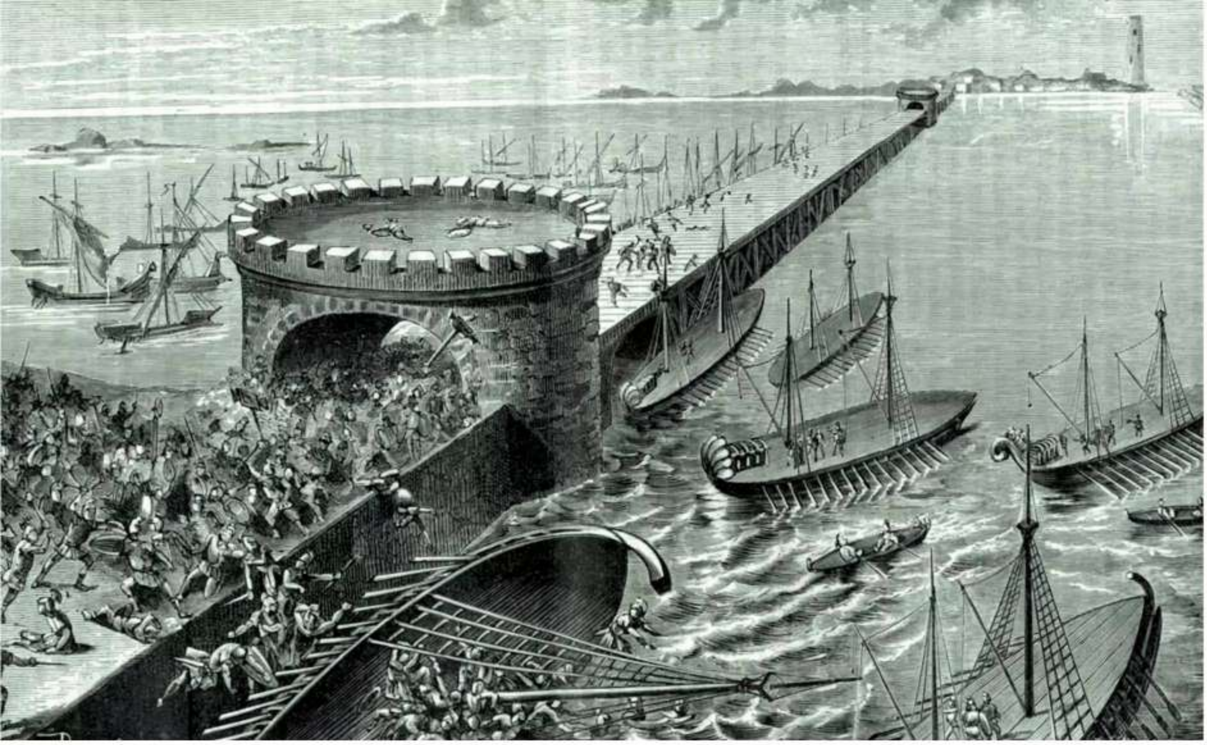
The siege of Alexandria ends with Caesar victorious, Ptolemy XIII dead, and Cleopatra restored to her throne alongside a new co-ruler, the young Ptolemy XIV.

c47 BC

Cleopatra gives birth to a son (pictured below) whom she names Ptolemy Caesar. The people of Alexandria leap to the obvious conclusion and rename the baby Caesarion, or "Little Caesar".

44 BC

Caesar is assassinated on 15 March, and Cleopatra flees Rome for Alexandria. Soon after her return, Ptolemy XIV dies and Caesarion takes his place as king.



Escape to victory

A depiction of the 47 BC siege of Alexandria, which ended with Egypt becoming a Roman protectorate and Julius Caesar becoming Cleopatra's lover

MARK ANTONY GAVE AN ASTONISHING SPEECH THAT MADE HIS AMBITIONS CLEAR. AS PATRIARCH HE WOULD EFFECTIVELY RULE THE WORLD

AKG-IMAGES/TOPFOTO/BRIDGEMAN

and Caesar's family would be all powerful.

In the summer of 47 BC Caesar left Egypt. The couple next met in Rome, where Cleopatra stayed on Caesar's private estate until his assassination on the Ides of March (15 March) 44 BC. Cicero, a dedicated republican, met Cleopatra at this time and disliked her: "I hate the queen… I cannot recall her insolence, when she was living in Caesar's house in the gardens beyond the Tiber, without indignation."

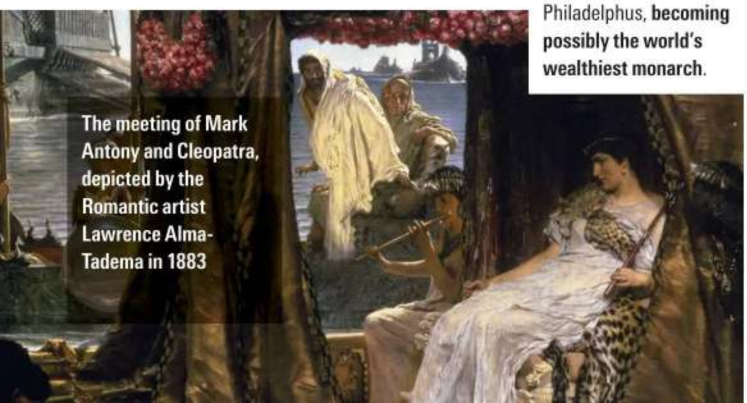
Cicero confirms that Cleopatra left Rome within a month of Caesar's death: "I see nothing to object to in the flight of the queen." Back in Alexandria, Ptolemy XIV inexplicably died. With the three-year-old Ptolemy XV Caesarion beside her, Cleopatra ruled Egypt for three peaceful years.

Outside Egypt things were far from peaceful. A triumvirate of Mark Antony, Octavian and Lepidus (a general and ally of Caesar) had determined to capture Caesar's

Mark Antony depicted on a coin. The battle-hardened general, wrote Plutarch, fell instantly for Cleopatra's charms

41 BC

Responding to his fascination with the cult of Dionysus, **Cleopatra meets Mark Antony in Tarsus**, dressed as his consort, the Egyptian goddess Isis. The two soon begin a relationship that produces three children.



The meeting of Mark Antony and Cleopatra, depicted by the Romantic artist Lawrence Alma-Tadema in 1883

37 BC

Cleopatra negotiates with Antony for the return of the lost eastern empire of her ancestor Ptolemy II Philadelphus, **becoming possibly the world's wealthiest monarch**.

34 BC

Antony makes his ambitions for his Egyptian royal family clear by **distributing lands held by Rome and Parthia** among Cleopatra's children. The bond between **Antony and Julius Caesar's anointed heir, Octavian**, is irretrievably broken.

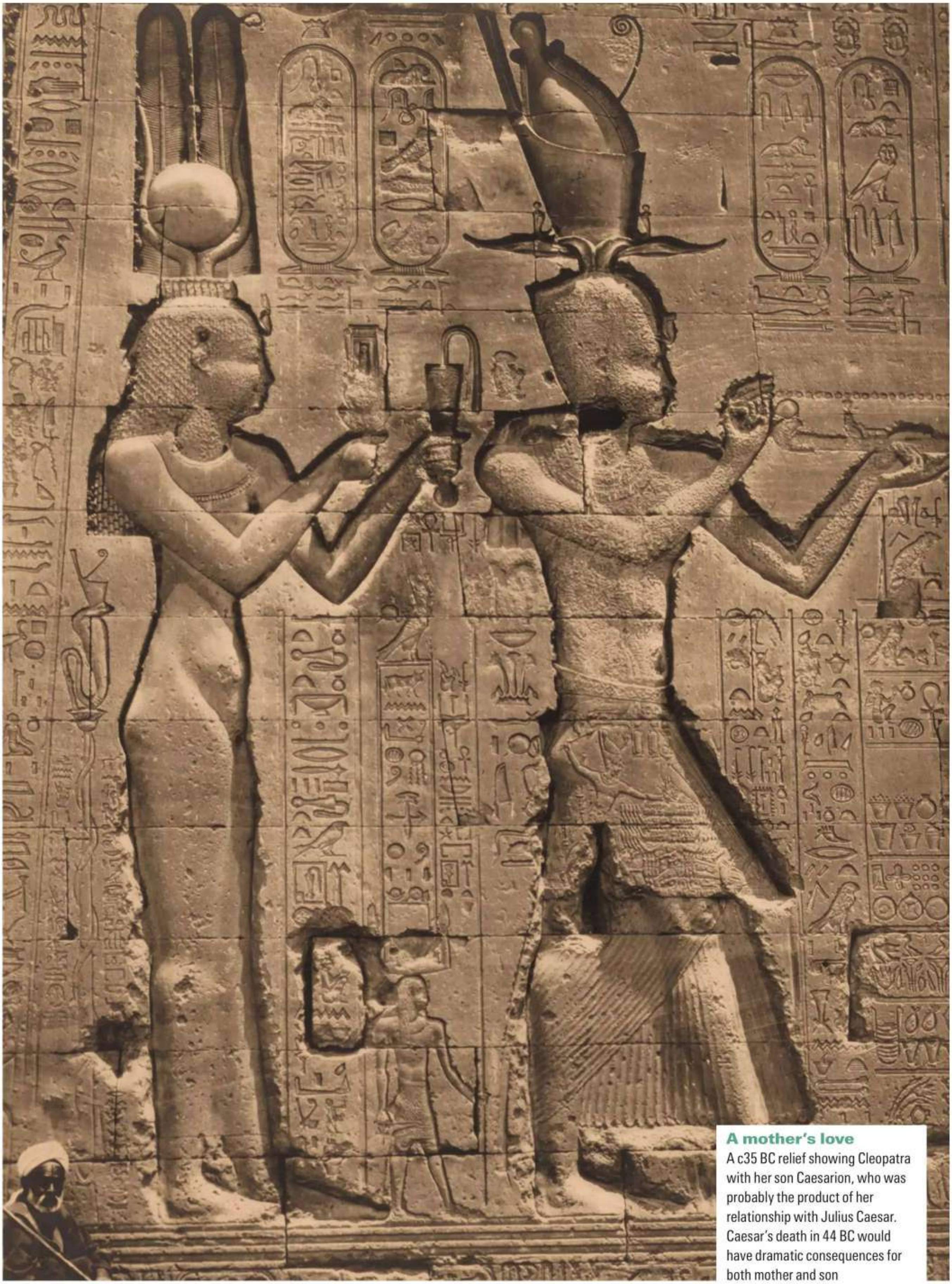
31 BC

The combined fleets of Cleopatra and Antony are defeated at the **battle of Actium** and they flee to Alexandria.

30 BC

Cleopatra kills herself, possibly using snake venom. In Egypt, more than 3,000 years of dynastic rule ends. In Rome, imperial rule begins.

A coin depicting Cleopatra. Her death in 30 BC confirmed Rome's domination of Egypt

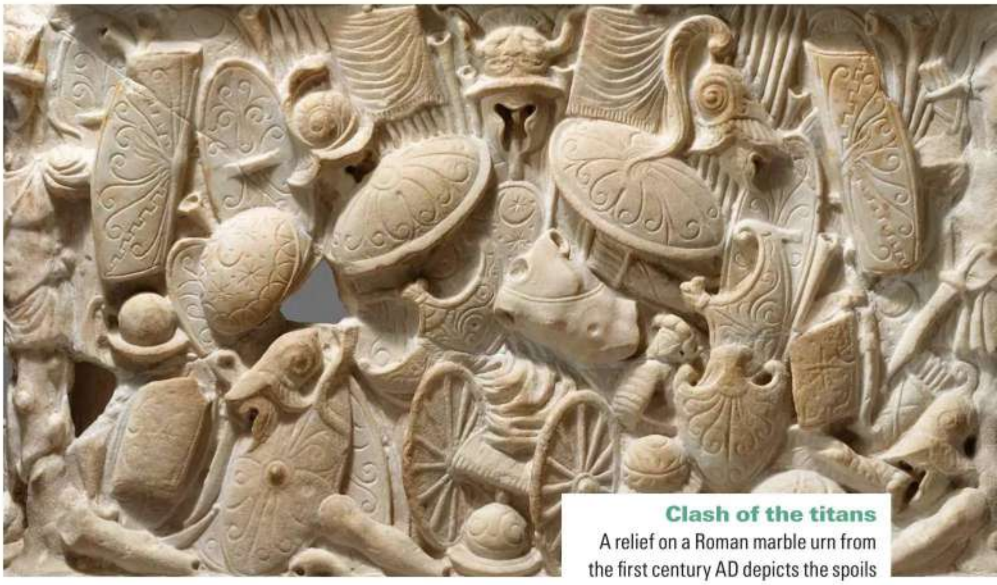


A mother's love

A c35 BC relief showing Cleopatra with her son Caesarion, who was probably the product of her relationship with Julius Caesar. Caesar's death in 44 BC would have dramatic consequences for both mother and son

SHUTTERSTOCK

> **CLEOPATRA NEEDED A ROMAN PROTECTOR, AND ANTONY – MORE EXPERIENCED AND POPULAR THAN OCTAVIAN – SEEMED HER NATURAL ALLY**



Clash of the titans
A relief on a Roman marble urn from the first century AD depicts the spoils of a battle. Caesar's death triggered a wave of bloodletting as the leading figures in the empire vied for power

assassins Brutus and Cassius, and they expected Egypt to help. Meanwhile, Brutus and Cassius also expected Egyptian assistance. Cleopatra hesitated then, siding with the triumvirate, she returned the Roman legions stationed in Egypt. She raised a fleet and set sail to join Octavian and Antony in Greece, but a storm blew up, her ships were damaged and Cleopatra fell ill. While she waited for a second fleet to be made ready, Brutus and Cassius killed themselves. With Lepidus essentially ineffective, two men now held power: Octavian controlled Rome's western empire, and Antony the east.

Cleopatra knew that she needed a Roman protector and Antony – older, more experienced and certainly more popular than Octavian – seemed her natural ally. When Antony summoned her to Tarsus (now in Turkey), she seized her chance. Plutarch is clear that Cleopatra intended to seduce Antony and that he almost immediately succumbed to her charms. "…she was going to visit Antony at the very time when women have the most brilliant beauty and are at the acme of intellectual power… she went putting her greatest confidence in herself, and in the charms and sorceries of her own person."

Cleopatra sailed into Tarsus on a gilded boat fitted with silver oars and a purple sail. Flutes, pipes and lutes played on deck, and incense perfumed the air. The queen, dressed as Isis, reclined beneath a gold spangled canopy attended by boys dressed as cupids. When Antony sent an invitation to dinner she declared that she would rather entertain him. Cleopatra captivated Antony with splendid food and drink, and they sat together that evening surrounded by a multitude of twinkling lights.

Cleopatra feasted with Antony, but she bargained with him too. She would provide funds to part-finance a Parthian campaign but he, in return, must protect her position. The couple spent the winter relaxing in Alexandria. But in 40 BC, when Cleopatra gave birth to twins, Antony had already gone. He would not see his Egyptian children for three and a half years.

In 37 BC the triumvirate was renewed for a second term. Antony now agreed to supply Octavian with 120 warships to be used against the pirate ships that were disrupting Mediterranean trade. Octavian, in return, would provide Antony with four legions to use against the Parthians. Antony handed over his ships, but the promised troops never arrived. Belatedly, Antony realised that he could not rely on Octavian. He travelled to Antioch, and once again summoned Cleopatra. She would provide the fleet that he needed, but in exchange she demanded the return of the extensive eastern Mediterranean empire ruled and then lost by the early Ptolemies. When Antony agreed, Cleopatra became probably the world's wealthiest monarch. In late summer 36 BC she bore her third son.

The Parthian campaign quickly turned into a humiliating disaster, and Antony was forced to retreat to Syria. It was not all bad news, however. In 34 BC Antony captured Artavasdes of Armenia. This was far from the major victory that he had anticipated. Nevertheless, Antony awarded himself the honour of entering Alexandria dressed in the golden robe of Dionysus, crowned with ivy leaves and carrying a wand symbolising prosperity, fertility and pleasure.

Octavian was not amused. Antony's celebration was akin to a triumph: a sacred Roman celebration. When this was followed by the elaborate public celebration known today as the "Donations of Alexandria", it seemed clear that Antony considered Alexandria a capital city to rival Rome.

Egypt's nemesis
Octavian, depicted in a statue from the first century AD, was alarmed by Mark Antony's military campaigns in Egypt and elsewhere, so set out to eliminate his erstwhile ally

ALAMY

All at sea
A marble relief shows the battle of Actium, which saw Octavian smash Antony and Cleopatra's power and establish himself as the dominant force in the eastern empire

Octavian and Antony could no longer rule together; one of them had to go. As a fierce propaganda war erupted, Octavian used Cleopatra – characterised as an unnatural, emasculating woman – to expose and explain Antony's inappropriate behaviour. Tales of Antony's unhealthy subservience spread like wildfire. Cleopatra had demanded and received the vast libraries of the Greek city of Pergamum in Asia Minor (modern Turkey); she had recruited Roman soldiers into her bodyguard; she had made Antony rub her feet like a slave at a banquet.

In late 32 BC, Octavian donned ritual garments, hurled a wooden javelin against an invisible enemy and declared war on Cleopatra "for her acts". It is not obvious what these hostile acts might have been. Cleopatra had in fact been a loyal vassal, preparing a fleet for Antony and Octavian and responding to various Roman summonses to Alexandria, Tarsus and Antioch. All this was irrelevant. Octavian needed to promote Cleopatra as an enemy of Rome if he were to achieve his ambition of eliminating the still-popular Antony. His men would not fight Antony, but they would fight Cleopatra – and Antony, he gambled, would stand by his queen.

The battle of Actium shattered Antony's dream of a glorious eastern empire. Plutarch tells us that Cleopatra and Antony had raised an army of not less than 500 warships, 100,000 legionaries and armed infantry, and 12,000 cavalry. Cleopatra supplied at least 60 Egyptian ships and commanded her own fleet. Octavian, with a mere 250 ships, 80,000 infantry and 12,000 cavalry, was outnumbered, but his fleet was better armed and better prepared, and his admiral, Agrippa, was highly experienced.

On 2 September 31 BC. Antony's ships emerged in three divisions, protecting Cleopatra's fleet. Almost immediately things went badly wrong as Octavian's fleet kept out of range, drawing Antony's ships out to sea. While Antony commanded the right division, the ships from the central and left divisions inexplicably retreated.

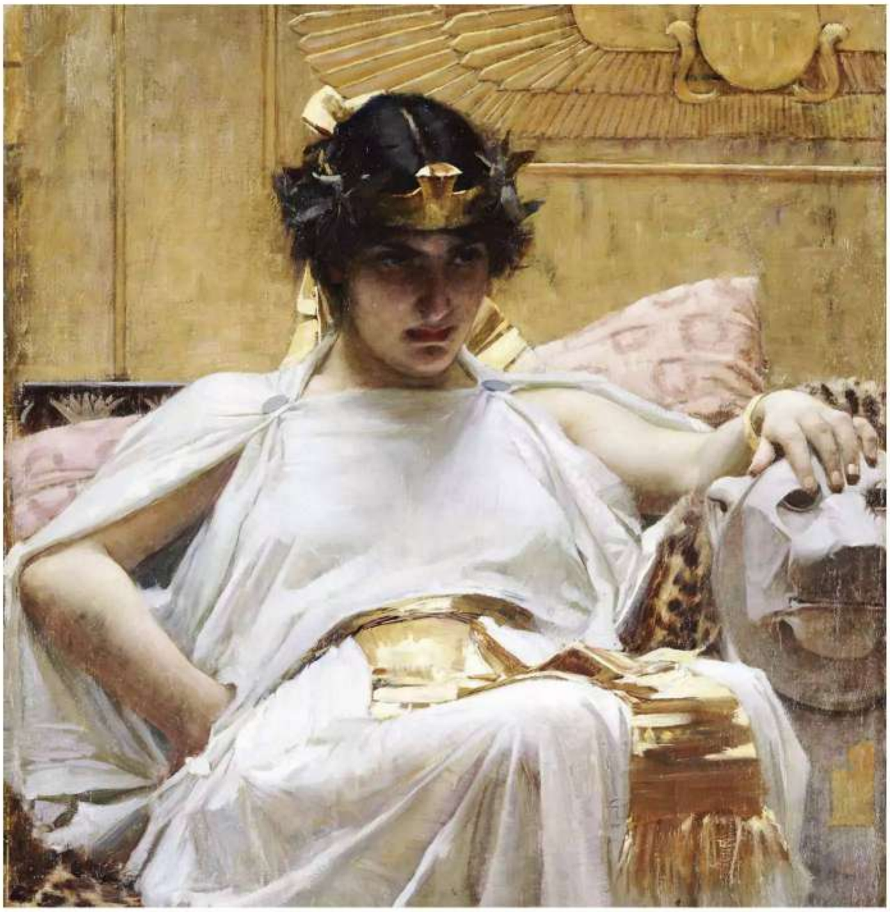
Then – unaccountably – Cleopatra's ships

BACIΛICCA KΛEOΠATPA ΘEA NEΩTEPA

Heading for trouble
Cleopatra, portrayed on a coin minted in c32 BC. The Egyptian queen showed loyalty to Rome. In return, Octavian destroyed her armies and smeared her reputation

AKG-IMAGES/BRIDGEMAN

ROME PORTRAYED CLEOPATRA AS AN UNNATURAL WOMAN WHO DOMINATED MEN, SLEPT WITH HER BROTHERS AND GAVE BIRTH TO BASTARDS


Seductive image Cleopatra – shown in John William Waterhouse's c1887 painting – has "evolved into a semi-mythological figure more famous for her beauty than her brains"

BRIDGEMAN

hoisted their sails, broke through Octavian's line and sailed away. Antony transferred to a quinquireme (a galley with five banks of oars on each side) and chased after Cleopatra. The sea battle ended with 5,000 of Antony's men lost and 300 ships taken. Meanwhile, Antony's ground forces had been caught by Octavian's troops; most of his soldiers subsequently defected.

Cleopatra went straight to Alexandria. It still seemed reasonable to make extravagant plans. A plan to flee to Spain was dropped when it became obvious that Octavian's ships would make the sea crossing far too dangerous. A plan to flee to India via the Red Sea was abandoned when Cleopatra's boats were captured and burned by the Nabataean king Malchus. Antony arrived in Alexandria to find Cleopatra's partially completed mausoleum packed with treasure. If attacked, she intended to set fire to her fortune.

In the summer of 30 BC, Octavian invaded Egypt from the east, marching across the Nile Delta to set up camp just outside Alexandria. On the morning of 1 August, Antony led his troops through the city gate, while his fleet sailed to meet the Roman ships. To his horror his ships surrendered immediately, and his cavalry followed suit. His infantry remained loyal but it was a one-sided battle. Antony retreated and, hearing (incorrectly, in fact) that Cleopatra had already killed herself rather than be taken captive, stabbed himself in the stomach. Cleopatra's death on 12 August 30 BC brought 3,000 years of dynastic rule over Egypt to an end.

The Roman propaganda

machine continued to manipulate public opinion against Cleopatra long after the battle of Actium. As Cleopatra had allowed Octavian to eliminate Mark Antony without staining Octavian's reputation, her story had to survive as an integral part of his. Caesar, the adoptive father who gave Octavian his right to rule, was to be remembered as an upright man who manipulated an immoral foreign woman for his own ends. Antony, Octavian's rival, was to be remembered as a fatally weak man hopelessly ensnared in the coils of an immoral foreign woman. Cleopatra was to be that immoral foreign woman: an unnatural female who dominated men, slept with her brothers and give birth to bastards. A woman foolish enough to think that she might one day rule the world.

The Roman story of decadence, lust and suicide – the contrast between the seductive, decaying power of Egypt and the virile, disciplined strength of Rome – has captured the imaginations of western artists and writers over the centuries, allowing Cleopatra to evolve into a semi-mythological figure more famous for her beauty than her brains. Plutarch is at pains to stress that Cleopatra was not actually a great beauty ("Her beauty, as we are told, was in itself not altogether incomparable") but rather an intelligent woman with a flair for languages who could "readily turn to whichever language she pleased, so that there were few foreigners she had to deal with through an interpreter".

Plutarch, writing at the beginning of the second century AD, can hardly be considered an eyewitness. Nevertheless his recognition of Cleopatra's intelligence fits well with medieval Arab historians' view of Cleopatra as the "virtuous scholar", a public benefactor who protects her people and is an accomplished philosopher, alchemist, mathematician and physician. It will be very interesting to see which version of Cleopatra the producers of the forthcoming film about her remarkable life choose to create. **H**

Joyce Tyldesley is professor of Egyptology at the University of Manchester, and the author of *Cleopatra: Last Queen of Egypt* (Profile, 2008)

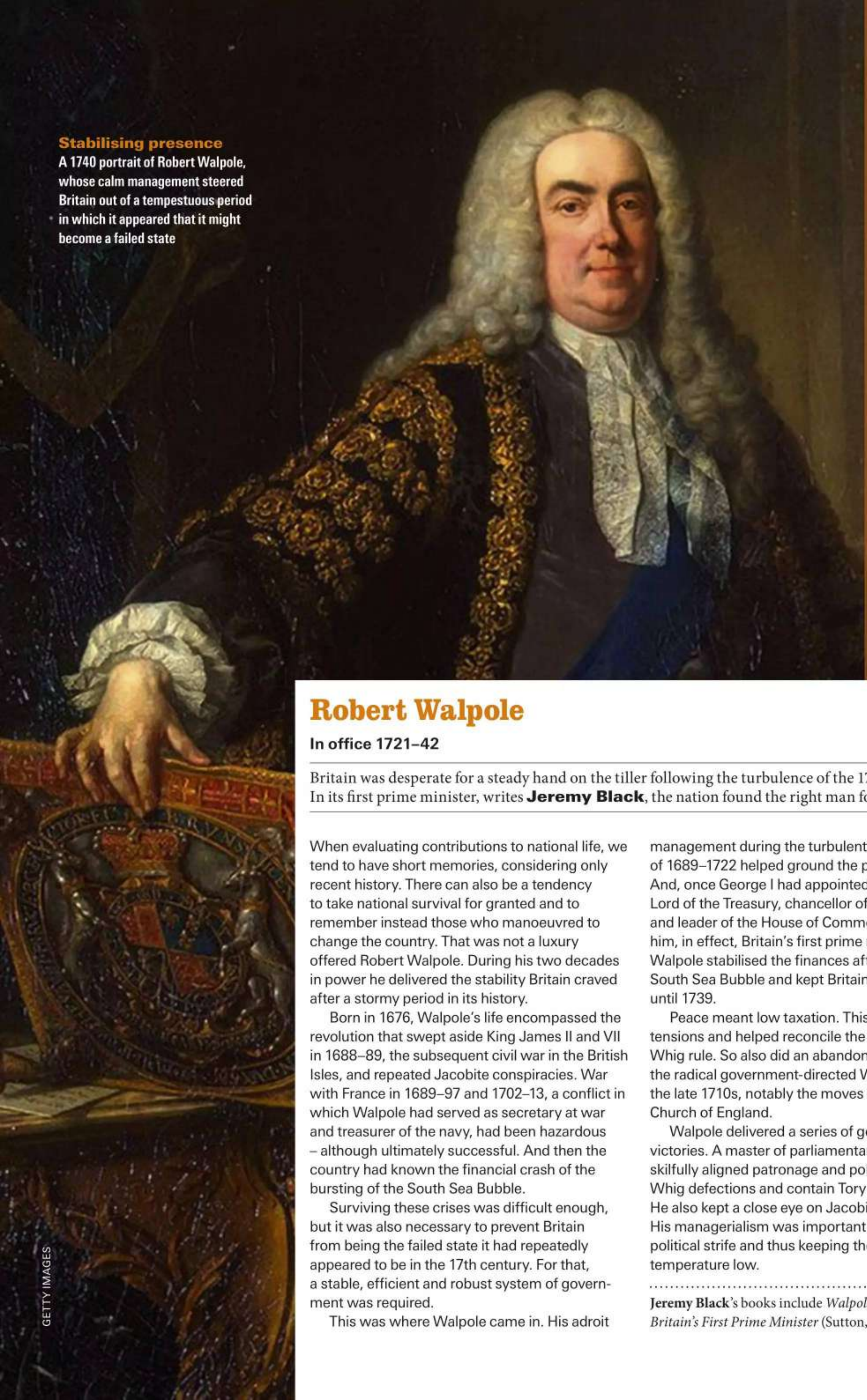
LISTEN Joyce Tyldesley contributed to the BBC Radio 4 documentary **The Forum: Who Was the Real Cleopatra?**. To listen, go to *bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3cswpsp*

A POLICEMAN ON GUARD OUTSIDE 10 DOWNING STREET, JUNE 1964; GETTY IMAGES

Who is Britain's greatest prime minister?

Three hundred years ago this month, Robert Walpole became Britain's first PM. To mark this huge moment in political history, we asked five historians to nominate the 10 leaders who they believe accomplished most during their residency in Number 10

Complements Sir Anthony Seldon's three-part BBC Radio 4 series **The Prime Minister at 300**



Stabilising presence
A 1740 portrait of Robert Walpole, whose calm management steered Britain out of a tempestuous period in which it appeared that it might become a failed state

GETTY IMAGES

Robert Walpole

In office 1721–42

Britain was desperate for a steady hand on the tiller following the turbulence of the 17th century. In its first prime minister, writes **Jeremy Black**, the nation found the right man for the job

When evaluating contributions to national life, we tend to have short memories, considering only recent history. There can also be a tendency to take national survival for granted and to remember instead those who manoeuvred to change the country. That was not a luxury offered Robert Walpole. During his two decades in power he delivered the stability Britain craved after a stormy period in its history.

Born in 1676, Walpole's life encompassed the revolution that swept aside King James II and VII in 1688–89, the subsequent civil war in the British Isles, and repeated Jacobite conspiracies. War with France in 1689–97 and 1702–13, a conflict in which Walpole had served as secretary at war and treasurer of the navy, had been hazardous – although ultimately successful. And then the country had known the financial crash of the bursting of the South Sea Bubble.

Surviving these crises was difficult enough, but it was also necessary to prevent Britain from being the failed state it had repeatedly appeared to be in the 17th century. For that, a stable, efficient and robust system of government was required.

This was where Walpole came in. His adroit management during the turbulent period of 1689–1722 helped ground the political system. And, once George I had appointed him First Lord of the Treasury, chancellor of the Exchequer and leader of the House of Commons – making him, in effect, Britain's first prime minister – Walpole stabilised the finances after the South Sea Bubble and kept Britain at peace until 1739.

Peace meant low taxation. This eased political tensions and helped reconcile the Tories to Whig rule. So also did an abandonment of the radical government-directed Whiggism of the late 1710s, notably the moves against the Church of England.

Walpole delivered a series of general election victories. A master of parliamentary business, he skilfully aligned patronage and policy to limit Whig defections and contain Tory opposition. He also kept a close eye on Jacobite schemes. His managerialism was important in lessening political strife and thus keeping the political temperature low.

Jeremy Black's books include *Walpole in Power: Britain's First Prime Minister* (Sutton, 2001)

William Pitt the Younger

1783–1801 and 1804–06

Dominic Sandbrook hails a brilliant orator who laid the foundations for victory in the Napoleonic Wars

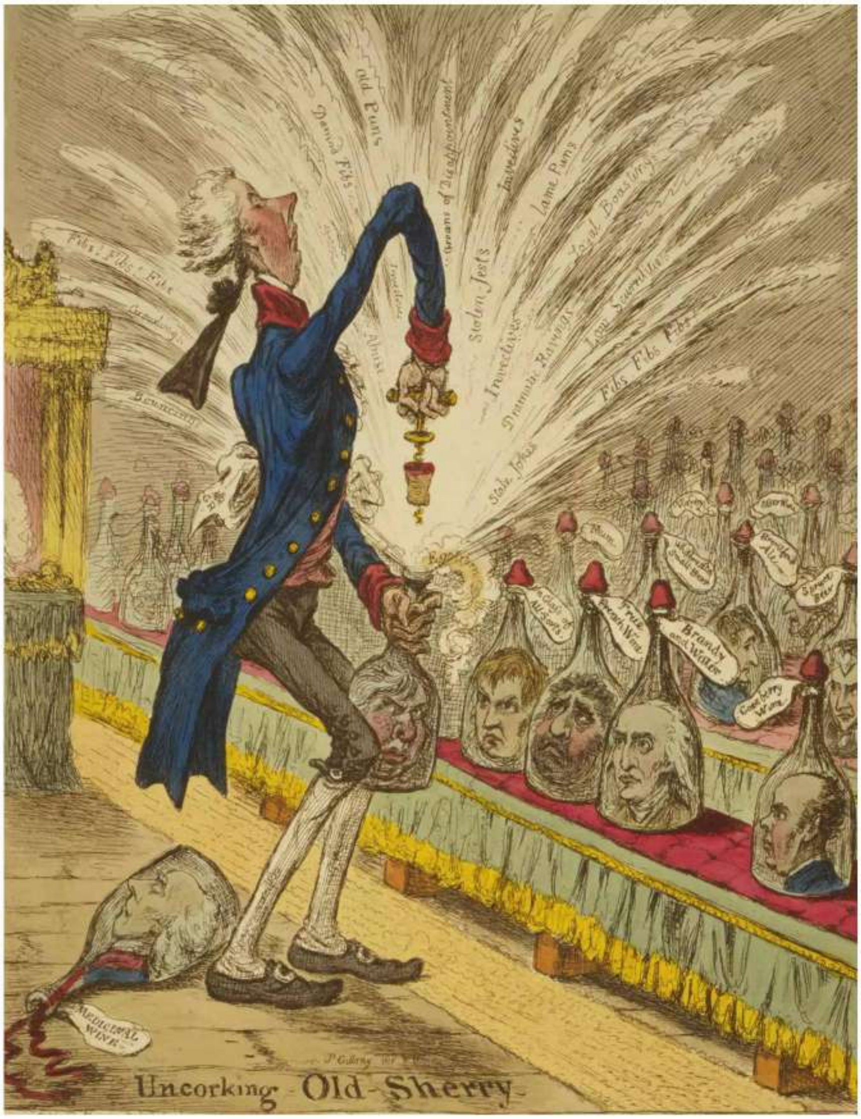
Today the one thing most people remember about William Pitt the Younger is that he first became prime minister when he was only 24.

That's a shame because, by most standards, Pitt stands almost unchallenged as one of our greatest prime ministers. "For personal purity, disinterestedness and love of this country," his friend William Wilberforce enthused, "I have never known his equal." And when Pitt died in 1806, worn out by office before he had reached 50, even his great rival the Whig politician Charles James Fox could not contain his shock and disbelief: "Impossible, impossible; one feels as if there was something missing in the world – a chasm, a blank that cannot be supplied."

The son of another great prime minister with the same name, Pitt's achievement was to steer Britain through the unprecedented turbulence of the French Revolution and to lay the foundations for victory over Napoleon. He became prime minister in 1783, with Britain reeling from the loss of the American colonies. Posterity remembers him as a Tory; in fact, he generally described himself as an independent Whig. His nickname, "Honest Billy", captured his upright, anti-corruption image. A brilliant speaker, he was not a gregarious man; caricaturists drew him as stiff and lonely. But he had a convivial side, and was known as a "three-bottle man" because of his taste for port.

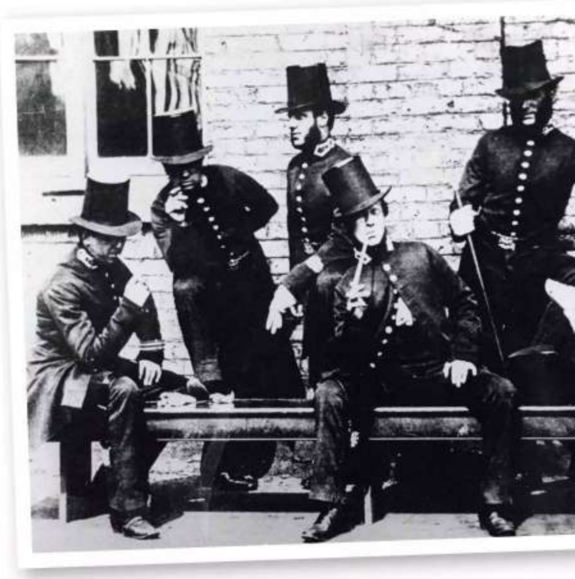
Pitt should be remembered, above all, for his leadership during the French Revolution. He recognised almost immediately the cruelty of Jacobinism, worked hard to maintain Britain's domestic stability and proved a brilliant financial organiser, mobilising the nation's economic might to double the size of the Royal Navy. It took until 1815 to defeat the French, and by then Pitt had been dead for more than nine years. But it was his victory, all the same.

Dominic Sandbrook co-presents the weekly podcast *The Rest Is History* with fellow historian Tom Holland

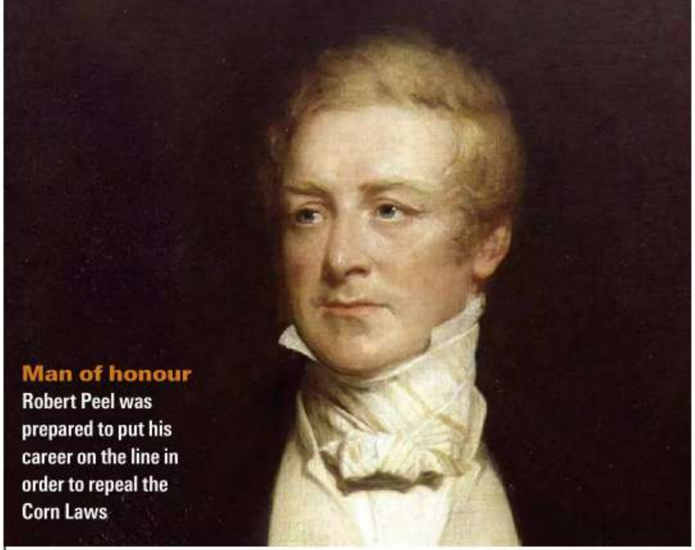


Glass act
In this Gillray caricature, William Pitt the Younger uncorks a bottle containing the head of one of his most vocal opponents, Richard Brinsley Sheridan. Few of Pitt's foes could match his oratorical skills, writes Dominic Sandbrook

BRIDGEMAN/GREATER MANCHESTER POLICE



Law enforcement
Manchester "Peelers" in the 1840s. The establishment of a professional police force numbers among Robert Peel's most significant achievements



Man of honour
Robert Peel was prepared to put his career on the line in order to repeal the Corn Laws

Robert Peel

1834–35 and 1841–46

Laura Beers salutes a leader who put the country's interests before his own – and, in doing so, reshaped two political parties

Robert Peel is one of the few politicians – the others being Joseph Chamberlain and Winston Churchill – who played a major role in shaping not one but two of our modern political parties. Between 1828 and 1830, Peel served as home secretary under the Tory prime minister, the Duke of Wellington, during which time he established the London Metropolitan Police force, whose officers are still commonly known as Bobbies in his honour.

It was Peel who, shortly after his appointment as prime minister in 1834, first used the term "Conservative" to define his party's political ideology, characterising political "conservatism" as an ideological commitment to reforming, when necessary, to preserve the established order.

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Peel's first ministry lasted less than a year, but he returned to the premiership in 1841. It was during this second administration that Peel took the momentous decision to put country before party and repeal the Corn Laws. The Corn Laws were tariffs on imported grain, put in place to safeguard the domestic market. As such, they were strongly supported by the landed aristocrats who made up a large and powerful faction within the Conservative party. Peel and his party had campaigned on a commitment to maintain the Corn Laws in 1841, in the face of mounting pressure from industrial interests in the Midlands and the North West.

Yet, as time wore on, Peel became convinced that the Corn Laws were hurting British consumers, a conviction that reached a critical point in 1845 when the Irish potato blight caused a famine in that country and an immediate need for cheap imported grain. It was this conviction that drove his repeal of the laws in 1846, even though he knew that to do so would mean splitting the party to which he had devoted his political life.

The bill cost him the premiership, and ultimately resulted in him being forced from the Conservative party. Although Peel never identified as a liberal, the modern Liberal party was forged in the decades that followed by a coalition of "Peelite" ex-Conservatives, Whigs, Radicals and supporters of Irish Home Rule.

In repealing the Corn Laws, Peel had not only shown rare moral courage – he'd also transformed Britain's political landscape.

Laura Beers is a professor of history at the American University, Washington, DC

Lord Salisbury

1885–86, 1886–92 and 1895–1902

This master of foreign affairs stewarded Britain to the very zenith of its imperial power, contends **Andrew Roberts**

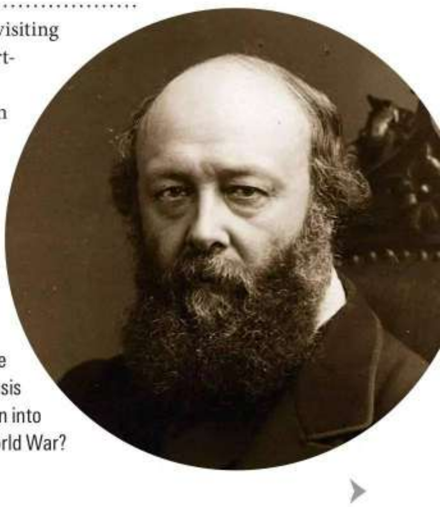
Robert Gascoyne-Cecil, 3rd Marquess of Salisbury, was the Victorian titan who brought the British empire to its greatest point in power and prestige, and almost so in terms of territory and population, too. If Great Power politics can be judged in terms of making one's country the top dog, Salisbury deserves number-one billing among British premiers. Yet because he was preceded by Benjamin Disraeli and William Gladstone, he receives relatively little historical notice.

Prime minister three times over a total of almost 14 years, Salisbury is our fourth longest-serving premier, serving for longer than either Gladstone or Disraeli. He was also foreign secretary for much of that time, and pursued the "balance of power" policy that helped keep Britain out of any European war in the six decades between the Crimean War and the First World War.

Salisbury's engaged but uncommitted stance towards Bismarck's Germany, Third Republic France and tsarist Russia (the last considered Britain's greatest geopolitical threat) was masterly. It is hard to believe that if he had lived a decade or so later, or longer than his 73 years, he would not have been able to settle the crisis that led to the debacle of 1914.

The key to Salisbury's imperialism was that he was not an ideological imperialist, but a highly pragmatic one. He recognised the over-extended nature of the British empire by the 1880s, let alone the 1890s. Not for him the jingoistic Cairo-to-the-Cape dreams of ultras such as Cecil Rhodes. He worried about defending the empire rather than extending it, although when parts of it were threatened – such as by the Khalifa in northern Africa and Kruger in southern Africa in the late 1890s – he was more than ready to defend it successfully. He made Britain more powerful than ever before or since, and thus has a claim to be our greatest premier.

Andrew Roberts is a visiting professor at the Department of War Studies, King's College London



Canny diplomat
Had Lord Salisbury lived longer, would he have averted the crisis that dragged Britain into the First World War?

David Lloyd George

1916–22

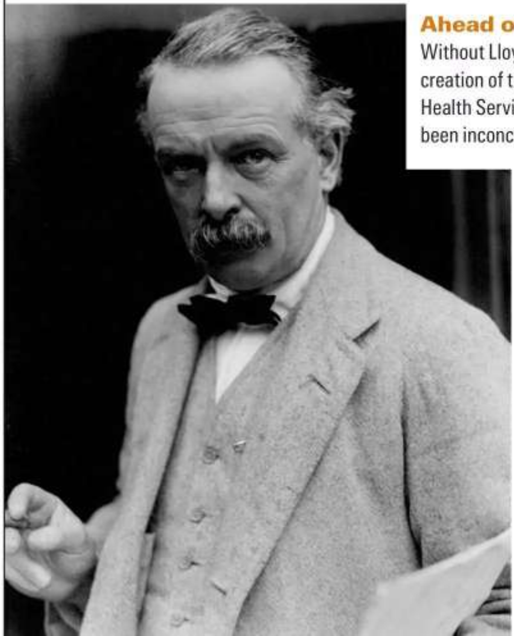
From national insurance to suffrage, the Welsh leader's programme of reforms laid the foundations for the modern state, suggests **Laura Beers**

Clement Attlee is normally credited with the creation of the welfare state, but had it not been for the groundwork laid by David Lloyd George – who served as leader of a coalition National government from December 1916 to October 1922 – the creation of both the National Health Service and the universal National Insurance scheme would have been inconceivable.

Prior to his ascension to the premiership, Lloyd George had spent seven years as chancellor of the Exchequer in HH Asquith's Liberal government, before moving to the newly created Ministry of Munitions in May 1915, with a remit to streamline production, resolve disruptive labour disputes, and shore up Britain's ability to fight the First World War. As chancellor, minister of munitions and prime minister, Lloyd George showed a commitment to strong central government in the national interest.

As chancellor, he was responsible for the creation of a graduated system of income tax, the introduction of old-age pensions, and the implementation of the country's first national insurance scheme, which subsidised health care and guaranteed disability and unemployment benefits for organised industrial workers. During the war, he increased state control over industry, regulated food prices, and brought labour leaders into the governing fold.

As the war came to an end, Lloyd George's government passed the 1918 Representation of the People Act, which granted the vote to nearly all men over the age of 21 and to a majority of women aged over 30. While his determination to put country before party split the Liberals, his reforms arguably created the modern state.



Ahead of his time Without Lloyd George, "the creation of the National Health Service would have been inconceivable"

MORE FROM US

Look out for our forthcoming podcast series on **Britain's greatest prime ministers** – with contributions from the historians on these pages – on our website at *historyextra.com/podcast*

Human touch Stanley Baldwin (pictured, second right, in 1928) "had an instinctive grasp of the hopes of ordinary people"

Stanley Baldwin

1923–24, 1924–29, 1935–37

It was thanks to the sangfroid of this three-time PM that Britain entered the Second World War in a spirit of unity, writes **Dominic Sandbrook**

Stanley Baldwin has an unassailable claim to be Britain's greatest peacetime prime minister. A man of the West Midlands, he had an instinctive grasp of the hopes and anxieties of ordinary people, enabling him to dominate the political scene between the two world wars.

As prime minister three times in the 1920s and 1930s, Baldwin projected an image of unflappable calm. He was the figurehead of a new aspirational Conservatism, embodied in the suburban estates springing up across the south and Midlands. He was also an unrivalled master of public relations: at once thoroughly modern, with his friendly radio broadcasts, and unrepentantly nostalgic, with his lyrical evocations of the English countryside.

To gauge Baldwin's achievement, just look at what was happening elsewhere. In the decades between the wars, the world was a deeply unhappy place: Germany scarred by the rise of Nazism, France and Spain torn apart by bitter ideological tension, the United States suffering the agonies of racial tension and mass unemployment. But Baldwin's Britain was a relatively happy, united and peaceful place.

He encouraged his fellow Conservatives to treat the new Labour party as a worthy opponent, and urged reconciliation after the General Strike of 1926. He scorned the histrionics of the dictators, recognised the menace of Nazism and planned a rearmament drive as early as 1934. And thanks to his patience and calm, Britain entered the war in a spirit of national unity. It was Baldwin, in other words, who did the heavy lifting for Churchill's victory.

If that is not enough, he also donated a fifth of his personal fortune to help pay off Britain's debts after the First World War. It was typical of this moderate, decent and thoroughly admirable man that he did it anonymously, and never sought to get the credit.

ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES

Winston Churchill

1940–45, 1951–55

Churchill's genius lay in the feat of galvanising a nation showing signs of losing its nerve, says **Jeremy Black**

Britain had faced invasion before in the era of prime ministers, most notably ones threatened by the French under Louis XVI and then Napoleon. But, due to airpower and hostile control of the European mainland – from Norway to France – no threat was as grave as the one presented by Nazi Germany in 1940.

The prologue was of repeated failure in 1939–40 and a growing sense of malaise. The rapid collapse of French will in 1940 showed how easily a democracy could lose its nerve and succumb.

That is the great significance of Winston Churchill. With its empire, Britain was not alone, and there were many others who played a role, but Churchill's leadership was crucial. Others would have been less likely to stand forth against those urging negotiation in what was a key moment in world history.

Of course, Churchill was no unalloyed success. His peacetime prime ministership does not compare with those of Pitt the Younger, another leader who led Britain during peace and war, while today his views on empire can, at best, be described as unfashionable. Yet, as a wartime prime minister, he was more successful than Pitt the Younger, and his global scan brought much to his role, as did his extensive experience in government and war earlier in his life.

Britain fought the Second Word War as part of a coalition. The partnership with France collapsed in defeat in June 1940, but, thereafter, Churchill played an often bad hand well in constructing and sustaining a disparate coalition and keeping it together into 1945. He also managed coalition at home – and, with the help of Clement Attlee, ensured that government worked better than it had done in the Napoleonic Wars or the First World War. In fact, the intensity of hostile Axis propaganda on Churchill speaks to his great importance.

Winston Churchill was very much a three-dimensional figure. It is a testimony to the two-dimensional character of today's "culture wars" that critics so easily set his enormous achievements aside and attack his reputation.

Man of war
Winston Churchill – pictured during a visit to an RAF station in 1940 – refused to countenance negotiating with the Nazis

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Winning combination
Clement Attlee and his wife, Violet, celebrate victory in the 1945 general election. Attlee's Labour party won with a thumping majority

Clement Attlee

1945–51

Labour's postwar leader presided over the most consequential raft of legislation in modern British history, contends **Charlotte Lydia Riley**

Watching Clement Attlee speak on Pathé News footage, he's notably unnoticeable, a genuinely shy man who looks a little like a mouse and tries hard not to draw attention to himself. But Attlee was a convincing public speaker, with a penetrating voice appreciated by the British public along with his plain tone and straightforward manner. He clung to both his convictions and the leadership of his party with an iron grip, despite frequent challenges and near constant in-fighting.

Born into a comfortable family in Putney, Attlee was drawn to social work in the East End of London and developed his socialist convictions through his experiences there. First elected as an MP in 1922, he was leader of his party by 1935, and took Labour into the wartime coalition with Churchill. And then, of course, he led his party to victory in 1945: a landslide, delivered on the back of victory in Europe but not yet in the far east, with millions of soldiers voting in makeshift polling stations in barracks and tents around the world for a new Labour government.

The achievements of the 1945–50 Labour government have become canonised as the creation of postwar Britain. The application of the Beveridge Report in the creation of the NHS and the wider extension of the welfare state, and the delivery of a "people's peace" to reward the sacrifices of the people's war are perhaps the most consequential acts ever overseen by a modern British prime minister. And let's not forget that all this was implemented in the context of the negotiation of the Marshall Plan and economic recovery from the ruins of war.

Attlee's imperial legacy is far more murky: the violence of partition in India, the rapid, disorganised withdrawal from Palestine, and the start of colonial violence in Kenya and Malaya. And these two sides to Attlee's premiership absolutely epitomise the duality of the British imperial nation, and the position Britain found itself in, in 1945.

Special delivery
Nurses hold a baby in Woolwich, 1948. Attlee's creation of the welfare state was "perhaps the most consequential act ever overseen by a modern British prime minister"

Charlotte Lydia Riley is lecturer in 20th-century British history at the University of Southampton

Harold Wilson

1964–70 and 1974–76

Wilson's progressive reform agenda, and his passion for standing up for the downtrodden, mark him out as great, suggests **Charlotte Lydia Riley**

Harold Wilson in his Gannex mac and pipe, and his long walking holidays on the Scilly Isles, was an unlikely herald of a new era of sexual experimentation. Born in Huddersfield to a leftwing family, Wilson won a scholarship to grammar school and from there progressed to study at Oxford before spending part of the war working as a civil servant under William Beveridge. Elected in the 1945 landslide, Wilson was immediately brought into government by Clement Attlee and, at 31, became president of the Board of Trade – the youngest cabinet minister in the entire 20th century.

Over the next decades, he gained the reputation for being somewhat opportunistic – supporting Nye Bevan, for example, until it became more politic to throw his weight behind Hugh Gaitskell – and thus was not really trusted by either the left or the right of his party. But perhaps the opposite of this was also true: by avoiding identification with either side, he was able to hold both together far better than someone drawn from one particular tradition.

It certainly is not true to describe Wilson as unprincipled: his socialism was rooted in his Christian faith, and his concern for the poor and vulnerable in Britain sat alongside a genuine desire to help the poorest around the world. His creation of the Ministry for Overseas Development, with Barbara Castle at the helm, was an important milestone in shaping Britain's post-imperial relationship with former colonies and the wider global south.

But, of course, what Wilson is most remembered for is the progressive reform enacted in the 1960s (much of it under his pioneering home secretary, Roy Jenkins): partial decriminalisation of abortion and homosexuality, the end of theatre censorship and the death penalty. The creation of the Open University and the building of Milton Keynes epitomised the white heat of modernity that Wilson sought to empower. His 1970s premiership was awash with recriminations and (more) in-fighting. But in the 1960s, Wilson was the very embodiment of, if not the swinging sixties, then certainly modern Britain.

Modern guy
Harold Wilson on the Scilly Isles, 1963. The Labour PM's progressive achievements include the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality and the creation of the Open University

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Fighting spirit
Margaret Thatcher leaves hospital following the Brighton bombing, 1984. Her conviction in the virtue of her beliefs never wavered, says Andrew Roberts

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Margaret Thatcher

1979–90

In the eyes of **Andrew Roberts**, ideological zeal and raw courage turned Britain's first female PM into a political colossus

Margaret Thatcher found Britain in a state of profound economic, political and moral collapse in 1979, about to drop into the rank of third-rate powers, and almost single-handedly dragged it back to its respectable present-day status oscillating between fifth and sixth in the global ranking of GDP. She diagnosed the socialism that Britain had pursued between 1945 and 1979 – with intervening periods of social democratic "Butskellism", which she recognised as socialism in all but name – as the cause of Britain's malaise, and was determined to reverse the process.

Thatcher had the necessary combination of ideological purity and sheer bravery needed to put her splendidly politically incorrect free-market beliefs into operation. It is perfectly true that she knew how to be pragmatic at times – avoiding a miners' strike when coal stocks were low in February 1981, for example – but she had an ideological star to guide herself by, unlike those premiers, sadly the majority, who merely find themselves buffeted by the crosswinds of political fortune.

It is true that Thatcher was fortunate in her opponents – General Galtieri, the fascist leader of Argentina; the Labour party's bumbling Michael Foot and verbose Neil Kinnock; the Marxist leader of the National Union of Mineworkers, Arthur Scargill, among them. But without her raw courage, seen when the IRA tried to assassinate her in Brighton, for example, she could not have saved her country in the heroic manner that she did. H

Sales pitch Thatcher, pictured in 1979 with a family that had just bought its council house, was hell-bent on extricating Britain from what she deemed a socialist malaise

›› Read Sir Anthony Seldon's article on how the office of prime minister became the beating heart of Britain's body politic, in our May issue

The hot seat

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The Prime Minister at 300, Sir Anthony Seldon's three-part series marking 300 years of British prime ministers, is due to air on Radio 4 in April

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The road to equality Protesters march in New York City, 1976. The gay rights movement in the US is one of LGBTQ history's most famous stories

“We need to see LGBTQ history as part of wider social and cultural changes”

Recent years have seen LGBTQ histories increasingly take centre stage, from the Stonewall riots to the queer pasts of National Trust houses. But what are the challenges of telling such stories? We assembled an expert panel to find out

INTERVIEW BY **MATT ELTON**

SHUTTERSTOCK

Matt Elton: Over the past few decades, popular history has increasingly embraced lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer [LGBTQ] narratives. Do you think it tells those stories well, or are there moments that still get overlooked?

Matt Cook: I think we've seen the development of really important narratives that have made LGBTQ lives visible. Yet at the same time, we have become increasingly aware that separating these strands from wider histories is very problematic.

We tend to base the timeline of LGBTQ history around big, clearly gay and queer moments, such as the 1969 Stonewall riots [a series of demonstrations that took place after New York police raided a gay bar]. But in a way, you could say that the most significant moments might instead be the expansion of the British empire and the way in which it exported a whole series of sexual norms and ideas of respectability around the world, or the inception of sexology [the study of human sexuality] as a science. But they don't tend to be part of LGBTQ history as it's popularly understood.

So while I would celebrate the upsurge in LGBTQ history, I'd add the need to see it as part of broader social, cultural and economic changes. That includes the emergence of LGBTQ history itself, which is a product of the counterculture and social history movements that emerged in the 1960s and 70s.

Channing Gerard Joseph: I want to echo that point. When we teach American history in schools, we're not teaching the LGBTQ aspects of, for example, the Civil War, Reconstruction, or the civil rights movement. *All* of the aspects of history that we teach in schools should reflect the roles played by LGBTQ people and movements.

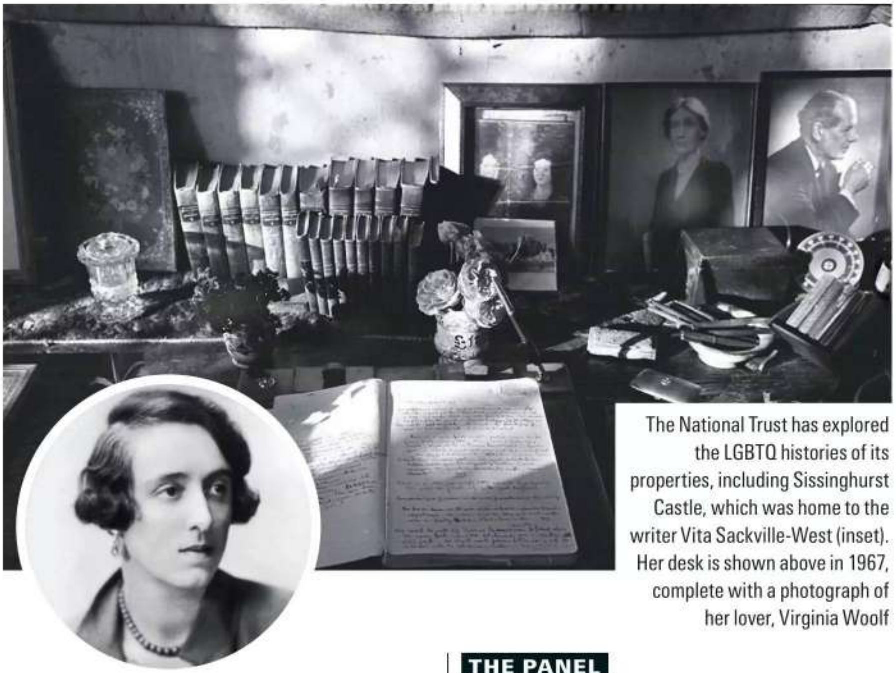
Angela Steidele: This is quite a difficult question, because how can we know what we're overlooking when we're overlooking it? There is still so much research to be done, and the problem is where to look. Archives in Europe are open, but what about archives in [countries with greater restrictions such as] Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and so on?

Jen Manion: I think what's been really exciting in the past decade is how much the LGBTQ community, and especially young people, has been really interested in our history. I see it especially in the transgender community: people are really hungry to understand the longer lineage of these kinds of experiences, and what a trans life was like before modern times.

That doesn't mean it's translating to mainstream society or general history writing, but I see such enthusiasm from within our community about documenting and learning about our histories.

MC: I completely agree. There's been a similar upsurge in the UK over the past 10 or 15 years. The wealth and breadth of the histories being explored, including at a community level, is incredibly exciting – but it's also happening in some of our national heritage institutions. The National Trust is now exploring the queer threads of its past, for instance [the organisation launched a major campaign to explore its LGBTQ history in 2017, and a series of other initiatives have followed].

One of the most interesting things to emerge from this is the idea that sexuality and gender themselves have a history. In other words, the idea of what a man and a woman are has not always been the same, and two men or two women loving each other has meant different things at different historical moments. There's an incredible richness in exploring those shifts in meaning.



The National Trust has explored the LGBTQ histories of its properties, including Sissinghurst Castle, which was home to the writer Vita Sackville-West (inset). Her desk is shown above in 1967, complete with a photograph of her lover, Virginia Woolf

THE PANEL

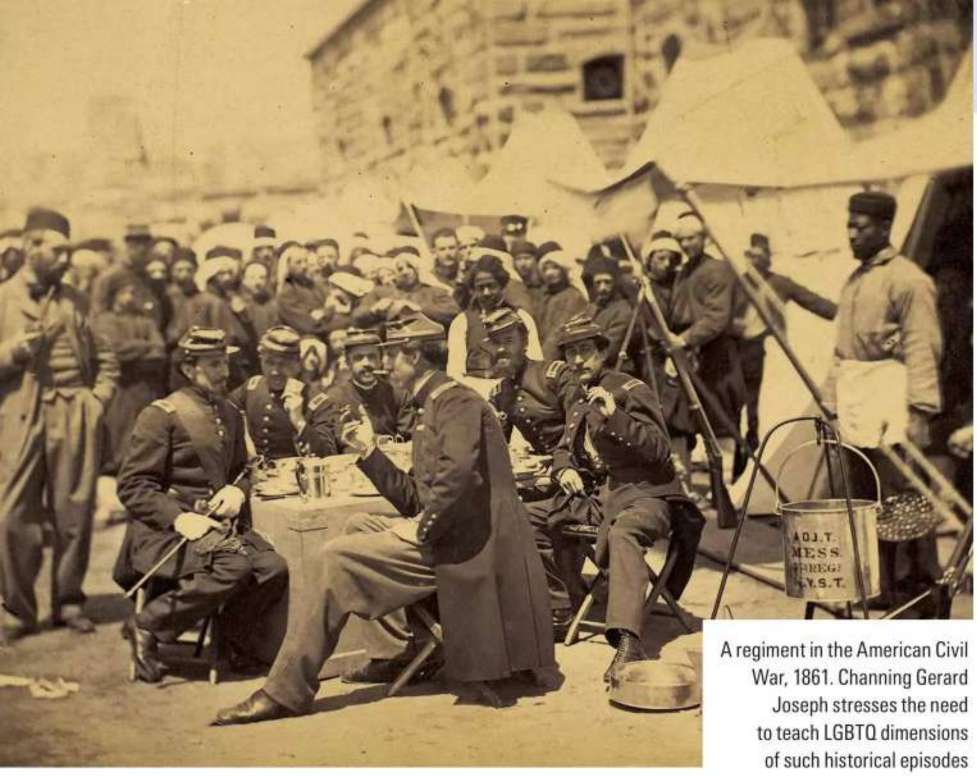
Matt Cook
is professor of modern history at Birkbeck College, University of London. His books include *Queer Domesticities: Homosexuality and Home Life in 20th-Century London* (Palgrave, 2014)

Channing Gerard Joseph
teaches journalism at the University of Southern California, and is writing a book on the leader of the world's first queer resistance organisation

Jen Manion
is associate professor of history at Amherst College, Massachusetts, and author of *Female Husbands: A Trans History* (Cambridge, 2020)

Angela Steidele
is a German freelance writer who has published several books on LGBTQ people, including *Gentleman Jack: A Biography of Anne Lister* (Serpent's Tail, 2018)

BRIDGEMAN/BEN CHISLETT/BRANDON JOSEPH/GETTY IMAGES



A regiment in the American Civil War, 1861. Channing Gerard Joseph stresses the need to teach LGBTQ dimensions of such historical episodes

GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY

ME: Is there a tension surrounding who gets to tell these kinds of stories, and who controls these narratives?

JM: As someone who's carved out a life bridging the worlds of being an LGBTQ rights activist and a professional historian, I can say that there's still incredible distrust within the queer community about what publishers and professional historians do with the records of our lives. Our history is so important, so it's about trying to convince people that there is value in having their records held by an institution with the resources to protect and catalogue them and make them accessible.

CGJ: My research focuses on journalism, and when we look at newspaper records of, for example, raids on gay bars or arrests of drag queens and female impersonators in the 19th and early 20th centuries, those stories are primarily being told by straight, white, cisgender [someone with a gender identity that corresponds with their sex at birth] people of a particular class. It's interesting that we're reliant on such records to find out about LGBTQ people of the past.

So, in a way, the tension that you mention is built into the process of historical research, because our stories have been told through a specific lens for a very long time. It's similar to the ways in which many of the available stories we have in African-American history are told by slaveholders rather than the enslaved people themselves. If we want to tell our own stories, we have to do a lot of work to find them, and to translate them for ourselves and for the public.

A Berlin memorial to gay people killed in the Second World War. The Nazis also destroyed pioneering research into historical homosexuality

> **"The fact that even activists in Germany tend to forget their own history shows us how important the work is that we have to do"**
>
> ANGELA STEIDELE

AS: The term "homosexual" was coined in Germany in the German language: it was first used in a pamphlet in 1869 by Austrian-Hungarian activist Karl-Maria Kertbeny.

So my country, Germany, is the home country of this first gay emancipation movement, which led activists to start researching historical homosexuality. All of this was completely destroyed by the Nazis, who killed them all or drove them into exile. And now, this story, which could make us proud, is forgotten in Germany, where activists today look to the US and Britain for inspiration. Our pride day, for example, is called "Christopher Street Day" [after the street in New York in which the 1969 Stonewall riots took place] – so we're going back not to our own history and our own gay emancipation movement, but back to New York. The fact that even activists tend to forget their own history shows us how important the work is that we have to do.

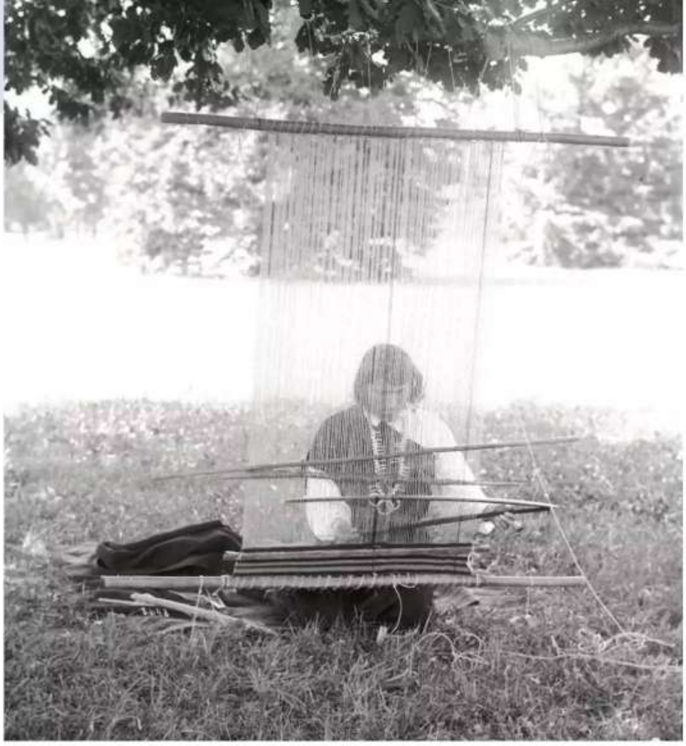
MC: I agree. We need to think about how we can access a whole range of different voices and not be seduced by the dominant voices and narratives that are constantly told and retold. As you say, Angela, the Stonewall narrative can occlude some of the earlier emancipation history, including in the German context – but it's also important to understand how histories of nations, and national legal systems, have played a part in LGBTQ history. We can't separate it from those things.

ME: How culturally specific is our understanding of these lives? Do we need to have a broader, more flexible view of these histories?

AS: As historians, we are always children of our time, and the categories via which we understand things are both a help and a curse. So it's vital to challenge everything, and ourselves, when asking historical questions. It would be great if looking to history could help us reshape our maybe too-narrow conceptions of sex, gender, and so on.

CGJ: It's interesting to look into the past to discover all the buried terms that were previously used to describe queer and gender-nonconforming people: "inverts", for instance, or "homosexualists".

These terms were used in certain time periods when people were struggling to



A "Lhamana" weaver in the United States, 1880. Such individuals occupied a position outside a binary system of gender, showing how ideas about gender identities can change in different historical periods and communities

categorise and understand gender identity. They are not terms that people tend to use for themselves today.

But there are other phrases used by these groups themselves. In the 1920s and 30s, for instance, there were lots of headlines in the black press reporting on what they termed the "pansy craze". Terms such as "pansy" and "queens" were used by people who expressed gender and sexuality in a variety of ways, and I think they would be startled by some of our prescriptions about how we think about it today. I often wonder how they would feel if they heard themselves described as part of the LGBTQ acronym, grouped together as one thing, and whether they would recognise themselves.

JM: The factor that complicates this question for me is the role of homophobia and transphobia, because while we are immersed in this material and care about respectfully exploring queer and trans pasts, there are people who just want to silence and suppress them. There are people who argue that if you can't produce a document that definitely references [a historical figure's] sexuality, you're imposing your activist agenda on history. That's a really powerful, destructive force that has kept queer history marginalised for decades – and, I'd argue, out of schools for decades. It's something that I think we have to fight against.

CGJ: Within a conservative academic context, there is really an assumption that if you're researching somebody of the past, the default person was cisgender and heterosexual. If you're going to assume that they are anything else, then you need really high standards of evidence to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that they are what your intuition tells you, as a person who lives in a queer body.

In a way, it's a case of advocating for our own intuitions as historians when we see ourselves reflected in history. But it's also sort of pushing against the assumption that someone has to be straight and cisgender, unless proven otherwise beyond a shadow of a doubt.

> **" The assumption within an academic context is that the default person in the past was cisgender and heterosexual "**
>
> CHANNING GERARD JOSEPH

MC: All of this really hits on something that I've been thinking about a lot lately, which is the need to problematise the idea of the "normal". When we look to the past, we tend to think that [what we now think of as being normal] is very stable and exists across time. But actually, if you start interrogating the idea of what is normal, then I think you begin to answer some of those issues by saying: well, if we question the whole idea that norms are stable, then you get much more of a dance going on between queer and normal. And you might be able to actually, I think, start to see the past in a different way and not necessarily assume that all married men and all married women were necessarily heterosexual. That wasn't a term that necessarily meant anything – it wasn't the reason why people were getting married.

AS: I think this discussion could be so inspiring for mainstream history. Terms such as "man" and "woman", for example, are still used monolithically as if everybody understands them and means them in the same way. But, actually, we don't.

MC: This is where the arts and culture have been so key, because often it's been the only place in which queer people have found a voice. There's a wonderful archive in London called the Rukus! Black LGBT Archive [housed at the London Metropolitan Archives], for instance, that's full of art and poetry and photography – because for years black queer people in the UK had no voice or representation, even in the gay press.

So it's really important to take art seriously as a way of recording people's voices, their hopes and dreams, fears and losses. These kinds of evidence are sometimes frowned on within the historical profession, so it's about making a persuasive argument for looking at the past through different lenses and in creative ways, and for taking various forms of storytelling really seriously. **H**

MORE FROM US

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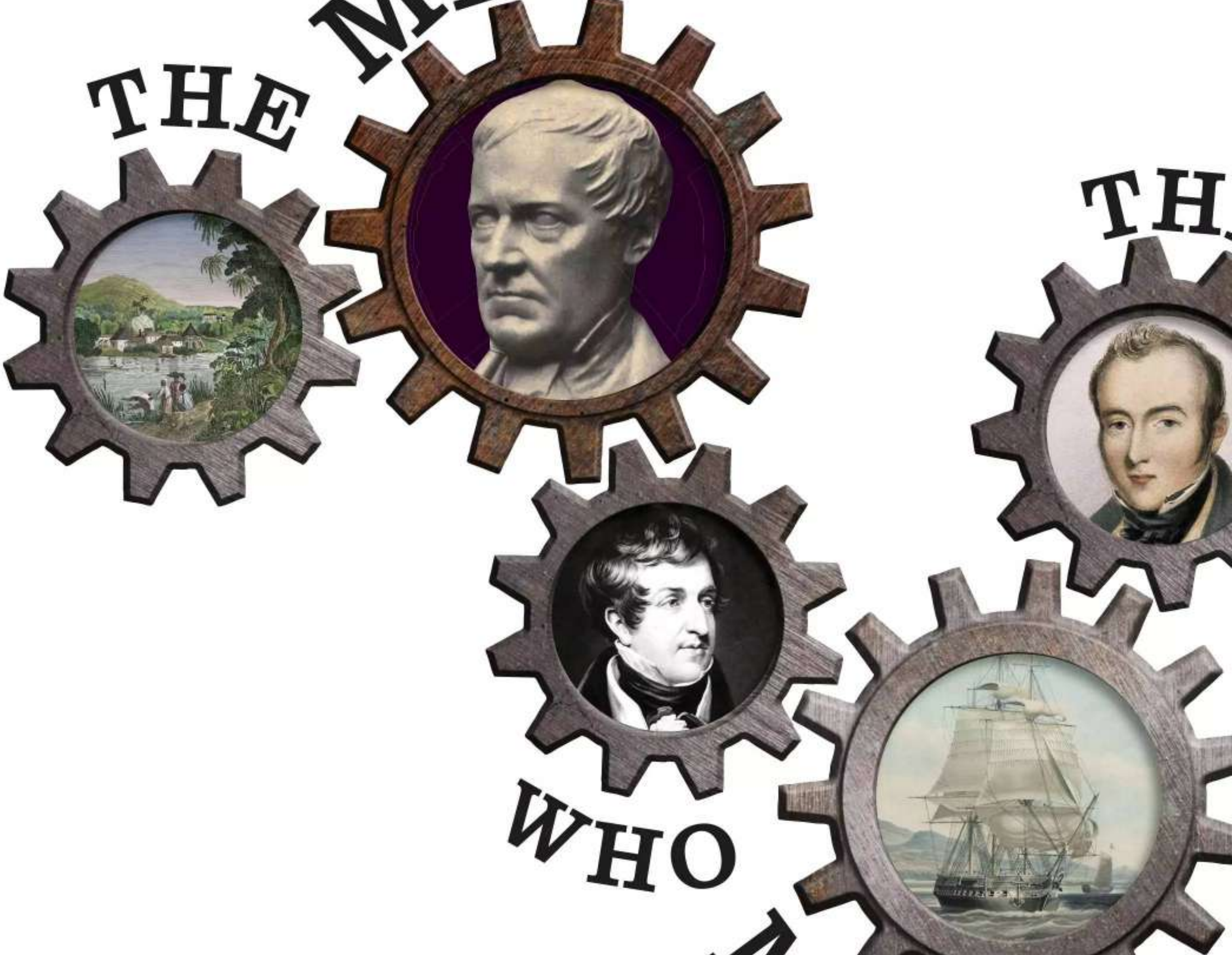


Global operation
From left to right: An 1837 engraving of a Jamaican sugar plantation; James Stephen, the under-secretary at the Colonial Office; an 1834 print of John Cam Hobhouse, who supervised the East India Company; an 1828 engraving of the Company's ship *William Fairlie*; William Hay Macnaghten, an advisor to Hobhouse; a c1820 painting of Company ships used to transport tea chests in the waters off China; a c1850 image of a cotton spinner in north India

DREAMSTIME/WIKIPEDIA CC/BRIDGEMAN/GETTY/

E EMPIRE RUN

From central London, a huddle of harried clerks sent out an endless stream of dispatches that influenced the fate of the British empire. **Alan Lester** focuses on the year of 1838 to reveal how these city-bound bureaucrats managed to govern the world's largest maritime empire

When James Stephen arrived at his desk on 1 January 1838, he was confronted by piles of dispatches from across the world. As the permanent under-secretary at the Colonial Office, which administered all 32 crown colonies that were controlled directly by the British government, Stephen spent every day "diligently… keeping back the flood of papers from deluging us". He even warned his sister that "I shall soon become a mere bit of blotting paper myself!" Amid letters from imperial governors in Australia, southern Africa, Sierra Leone, Malta and Canada, Stephen faced – among other issues – the spectre of colonists' rebellions, which deeply concerned him; anxieties about the aftermath of emancipation; and massacres of indigenous peoples carried out by British settlers.

Stephen was the personification of the Colonial Office, working 18-hour days, six days a week to interpret every dispatch and draft most of the responses on behalf of the British government. He and his staff of 25 worked from a dilapidated townhouse in Downing Street, its floors creaking under the weight of filing cabinets. The politician Charles Buller wrote of its "sighing rooms", where supplicants waited endlessly for appointments in dark, dingy annexes, providing Charles Dickens with a model for *Little Dorrit*'s "circumlocution office".

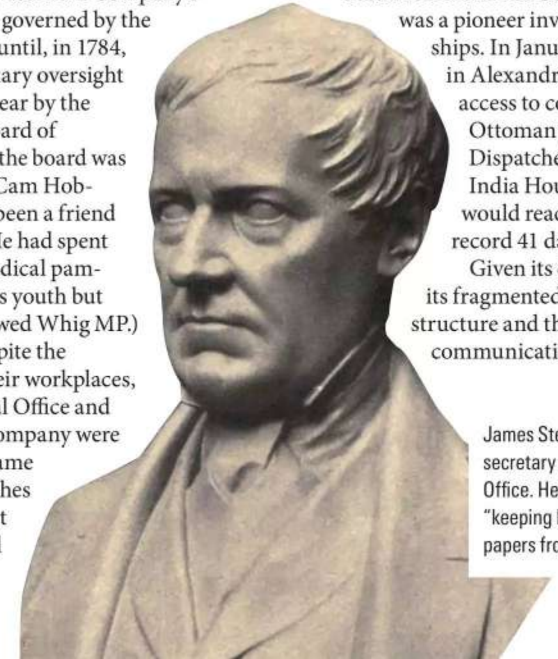
The rest of the British empire was governed from East India House, a grand neo-classical palace in the heart of the financial district. Here the East India Company directors oversaw the governance of India and associated territories with a staff three times as large as Stephen's. (In India the territories acquired by the East India Company's armies had been governed by the Company alone until, in 1784, more parliamentary oversight was brought to bear by the government's Board of Control. In 1838 the board was headed by John Cam Hobhouse, who had been a friend of Lord Byron. He had spent time in jail for radical pamphleteering in his youth but was now a mellowed Whig MP.)

However, despite the differences in their workplaces, both the Colonial Office and the East India Company were plagued by the same problem: dispatches took weeks, if not months, to travel from the far-flung colonies to London. Steamships were in their infancy, and the vagaries of ocean current and wind determined sailing times – and the speed of communication. When William Nicolay, governor of Mauritius, complained to Stephen in a dispatch dated 10 October 1837 that he had still not been notified officially of Queen Victoria's accession back in June 1837, although the news had already arrived with the London newspapers, Stephen explained tersely that "Merchant Vessels are simultaneously advertised as about to sail from London, Liverpool, Bristol… [and] the actual time of their departure cannot be stated with any degree of certainty, until immediately before they sail", adding "vessels do not arrive at their destination in the order… in which they may have… left England".

Steamships were in their infancy, and the vagaries of ocean current and wind determined sailing times – and the speed of communication

Hobhouse's communications were no more reliable. The quickest route for dispatches from India was from Bombay (Mumbai) or Karachi via the Red Sea, across the Isthmus of Suez by land and then on by sea from Alexandria. With sailing ships frequently becalmed in the Red Sea, the Company was a pioneer investor in steamships. In January 1838 its agent in Alexandria negotiated access to coal depots at Ottoman ports en route. Dispatches sent from East India House that March would reach Bombay in a record 41 days.

Given its dispersed nature, its fragmented administrative structure and the difficulties of communication, how was the largest empire that the world had ever seen governed, everywhere and all at once? Based on research for my new book, *Ruling the World: Freedom, Civilisation and Liberalism in the 19th Century British Empire*, this article takes a snapshot of the first full year of Queen Victoria's reign: 1838. By focusing on one year, we can see how Colonial Office clerks and Company men made the decisions that shaped the rest of the world.



James Stephen, under-secretary at the Colonial Office. He spent his days "keeping back the flood of papers from deluging us"

On 1 January, Lord Auckland, the East India Company's governor general of India, and his sister Emily were diverted from touring northern India by reports of an unusually severe famine in the Agra region. The economic volatility brought about by the end of the Company's monopoly on trade with Britain in 1813 and with China in 1833 had contributed to extreme poverty.

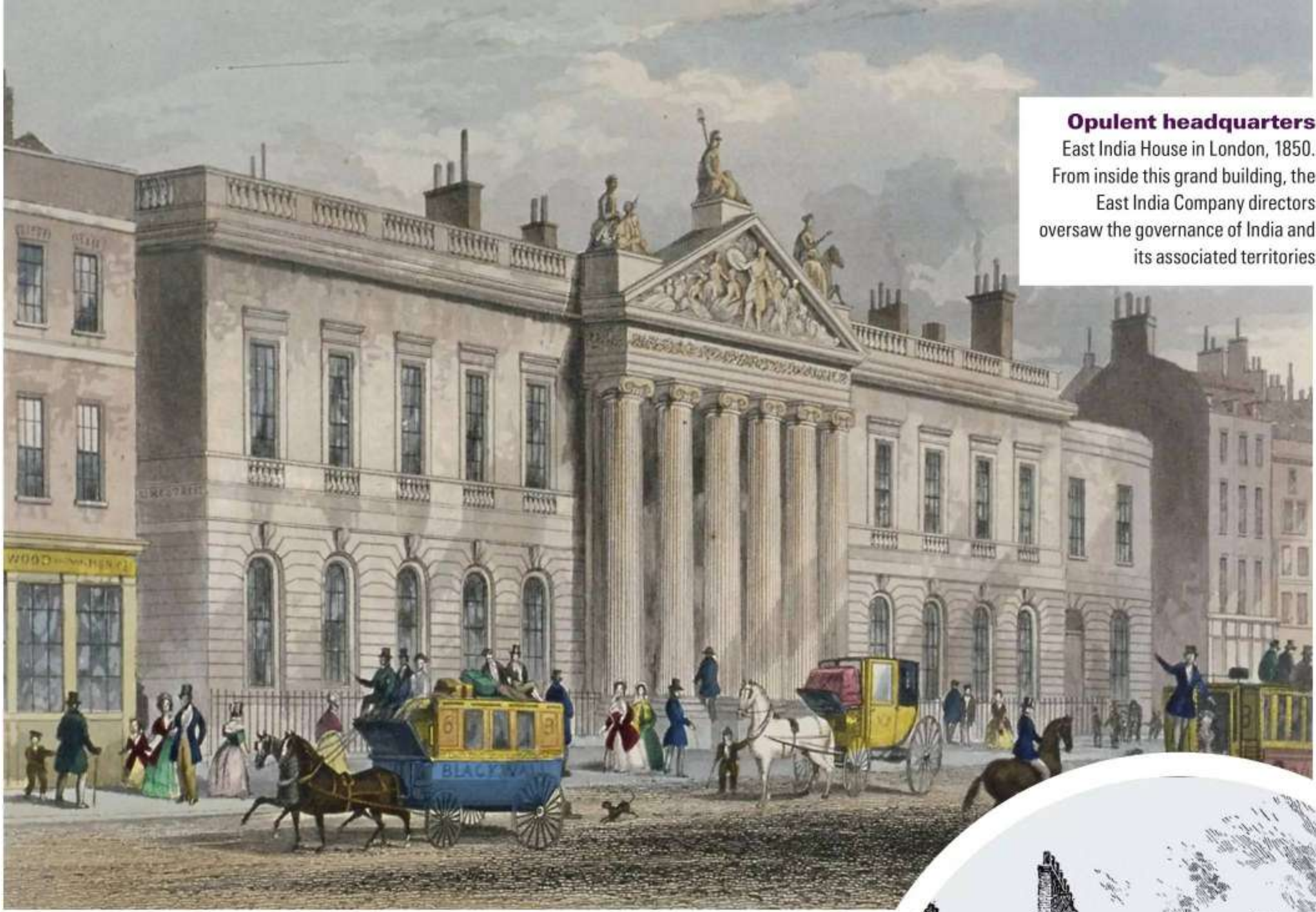
Indians who were reliant on cotton production and export had been undercut by British imports. And they were charged rent purely for the privilege of being governed by the Company; this money was poured into the pockets of the Company's shareholders, whose annual dividends of 10.5 per cent were funded wholly by the rent. None of this was helping impoverished peasants to buy food. El Niño weather events had then caused harvest failure, further raising prices.

Hobhouse received Auckland's "harrowing accounts of famine and distress" in February. He and the Company directors agreed to pay a sum of 2 million rupees for the able-bodied who could work for it, but prohibited handouts to the incapacitated so as to afford "the greatest possible facilities for free and unrestricted commerce". In all some 800,000 Indians would starve to death by the end of the summer.

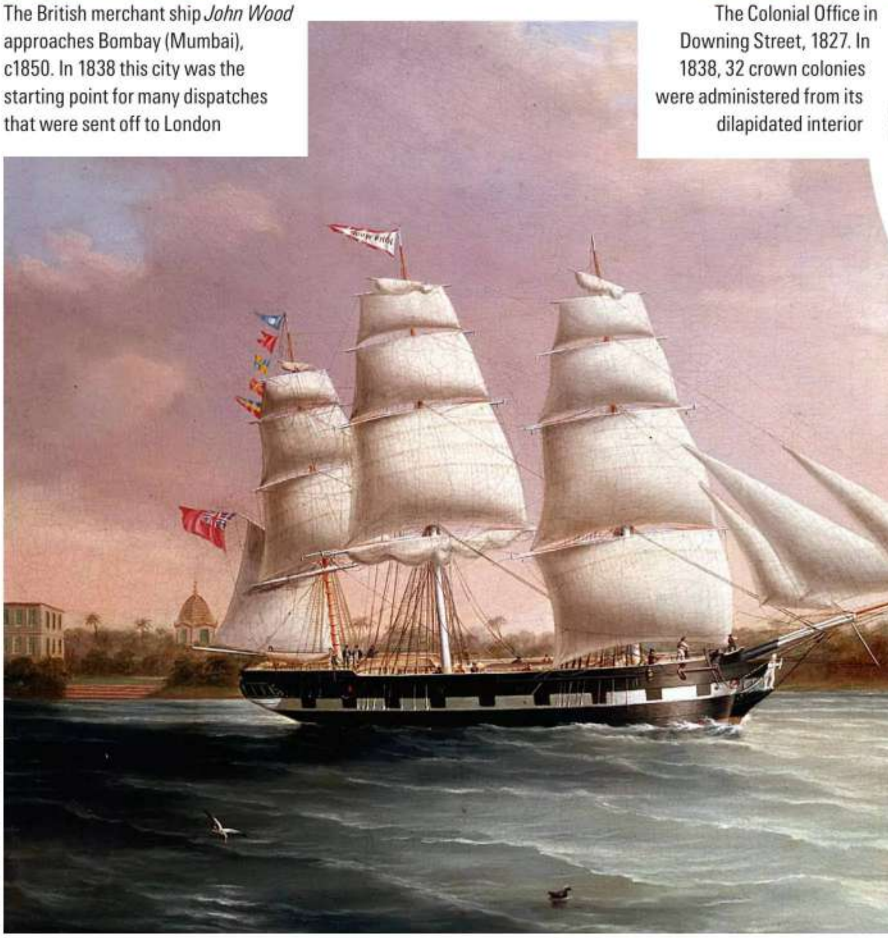
Power hoarding

In the Colonial Office, Stephen was dealing with the aftermath of abolishing slavery. The Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, which he had drafted, had not actually freed enslaved people from their owners' control. Instead, 800,000 enslaved people had become unpaid "apprentices", obliged to continue working for their former owners. This period of "apprenticeship", along with the payment of £20m compensation to the slave owners (not the enslaved), had been necessary to secure parliament's approval for abolition. Apprentices were due to be freed to find their own employers from 1 August 1838.

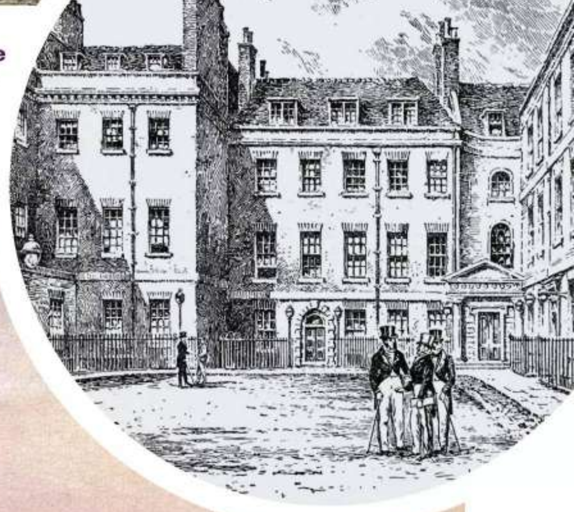
Their emancipation would significantly increase the free black population of Jamaica, and these freed apprentices would potentially be eligible to vote for the colony's assembly. Governor Lionel Smith had a suggestion – that the property qualification be raised in anticipation, so as to maintain white planter



Opulent headquarters
East India House in London, 1850. From inside this grand building, the East India Company directors oversaw the governance of India and its associated territories



Wind in the sails
The British merchant ship *John Wood* approaches Bombay (Mumbai), c1850. In 1838 this city was the starting point for many dispatches that were sent off to London



Dour workplace
The Colonial Office in Downing Street, 1827. In 1838, 32 crown colonies were administered from its dilapidated interior

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Stephen felt the Christianity and "civilisation" of indigenous peoples should be the object of colonisation – not their destruction

domination. From Mauritius, governor William Nicolay agreed: "The period is far – very far – distant… [when a] representative legislature could be safely introduced, founded on… the equality of legal rights."

Stephen affirmed that any *explicit* racial discrimination could not be allowed. Setting a precedent for other colonies where propertyless, formerly enslaved people of colour were about to join the predominantly white free population, the Jamaican Assembly would raise the property franchise without specifying any form of racial exclusion.

However, in the early months of 1838 Stephen's overriding concern was the rebellion in Canada. British settlers in Upper Canada were joining with French-speaking colonists in Lower Canada to force the governors' cliques to share power. Armed US citizens were raiding across the border in support of the rebels, and Stephen feared a second American Revolution. "Oh Canada" he lamented, "what wrongs have I done thee that thou… pursuest me in my house & my office, my walks & my dreams?"

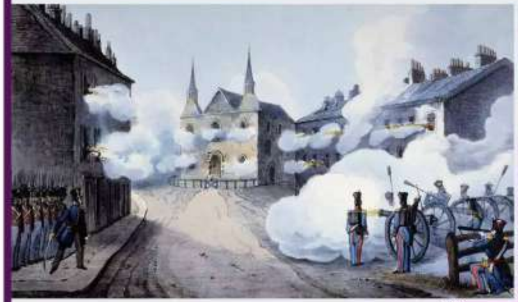
Turbo-charged colonisation

The rebellion was a by-product of decades spent encouraging Britons to emigrate to the colonies of North America, Australia and southern Africa as a cure for supposed overpopulation at home. Turbo-charged "systematic colonisation" was now government policy. The accelerated British diaspora was causing Stephen two major headaches. The first, manifesting in Canada, was how to respond when British settlers demanded the right to govern themselves. The other was how these settlers should engage with the indigenous peoples whose lands they were taking.

Stephen was simultaneously digesting the recommendations of a select committee which condemned emigrants for the brutality of their invasion. He agreed that the Christianity and "civilisation" of indigenous peoples should be the objects of British colonisation, not these peoples' destruction. Yet he still had to encourage further emigration.

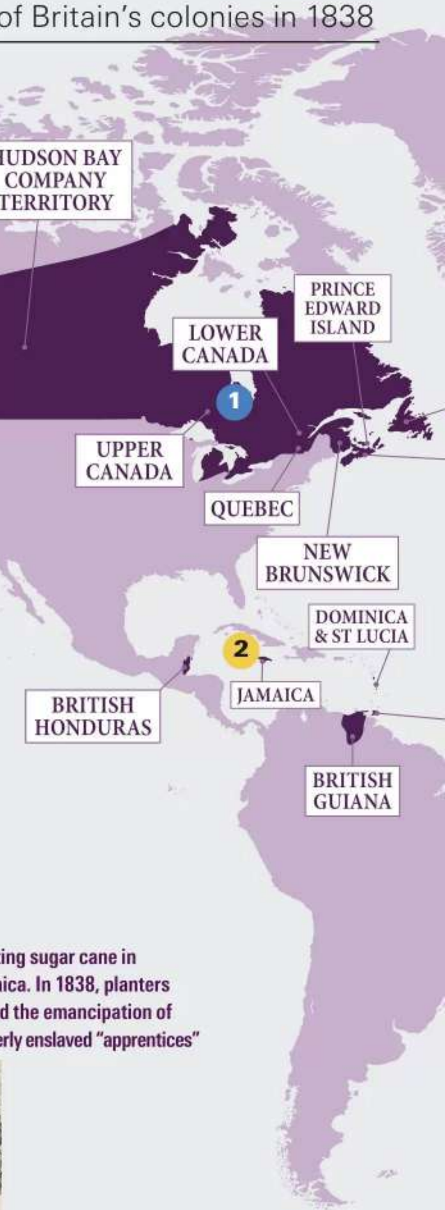
SMUGGLING, SUBVERSION AND SLAUGHTER

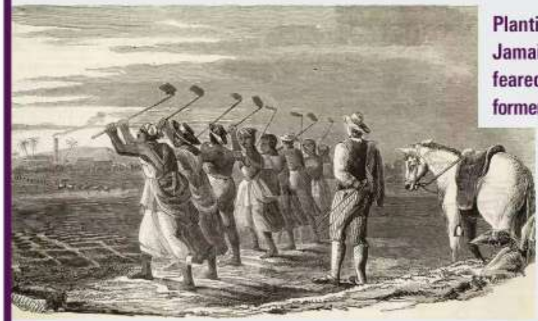
The events that dominated seven of Britain's colonies in 1838



The 1837 Papineau Rebellion in Lower Canada. Uprisings continued across the country in 1838, causing grave concern in Britain

1 **Upper Canada** Major rebellions that had begun in late 1837 continued in 1838. US "Patriots" were crossing the border, hoping to unite with disaffected British settlers in Upper Canada and French-speaking rebels in Lower Canada to bring about another North American republic. Lord Durham arrived from Britain to propose a remedy in the form of the settlers' democratic self-governance within the empire. This would effectively remove London's ability to safeguard indigenous interests.





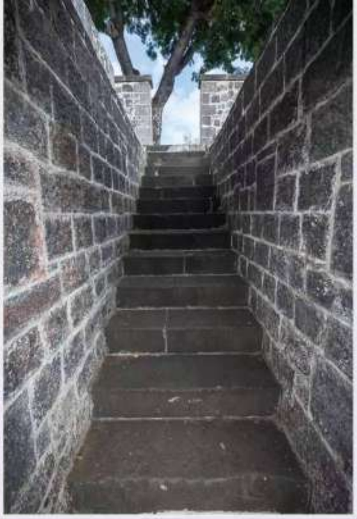
Planting sugar cane in Jamaica. In 1838, planters feared the emancipation of formerly enslaved "apprentices"

2 **Jamaica** The scene of the most significant planter anxiety about the emancipation of formerly enslaved "apprentices" on 1 August 1838. Planters were devising schemes to secure replacement cheap labour from other colonies including Malta, until William Ewart Gladstone's father set a regional precedent in Guyana: he emulated Mauritius' planters by importing indentured labourers from British India. Jamaica's governor, Lionel Smith, meanwhile, was proposing a way of excluding newly freed black people from the legislative assembly's franchise in order to maintain the white grip on power.

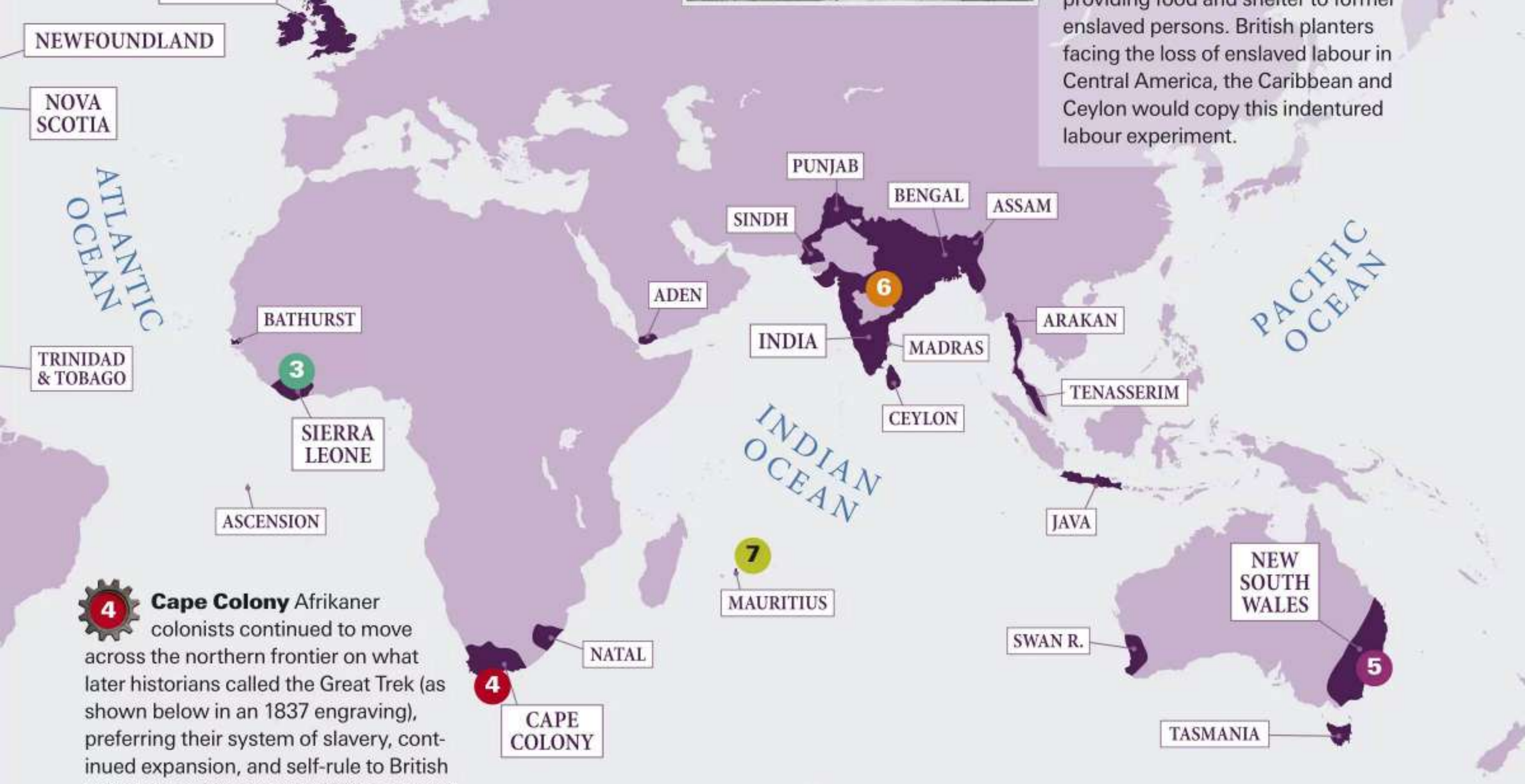
3 **Sierra Leone** Still the main dropping-off point for Africans rescued by the Royal Navy from other nations' slave ships. Traditionally referred to as "liberated Africans", they are today generally referred to as "Recaptives". Unable to return home across hundreds of miles of raider-infested territory, most were apprenticed for 15 years to free settlers without pay. In 1838 James Stephen was considering whether the apprenticed "liberated Africans" in Sierra Leone should be emancipated like the formerly enslaved apprentices in the Caribbean, Cape and Mauritius, but he decided against it, believing that their apprenticeships would help to "civilise" them.

BRIDGEMAN/ALAMY

6 **India** The Agra famine continued in the north-west provinces, only partially mitigated by the East India Company's relief for the able-bodied. Some 800,000 would die of starvation. Meanwhile, the Company's investments in steam were laying the foundations for steamship navigation of the major rivers and railway development; Company forces were set to invade and occupy Afghanistan; and Company steamships were preparing to join with the Royal Navy in war on China for daring to crack down on the smuggling of the opium it produced in India.

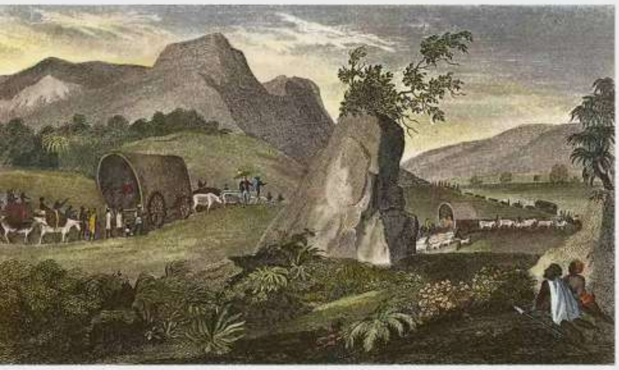


7 **Mauritius** Governor Nicolay was delighted that the British government's payment of compensation to the island's former slave owners was now feeding into the economy, enabling enhanced sugar production with indentured workers. Plantation owners were establishing an industrial-scale indentured labour system to bring low-paid workers from India. (Nearly half a million indentured labourers arrived at Aapravasi Ghat, Port Louis, shown left.) This proved cheaper than providing food and shelter to former enslaved persons. British planters facing the loss of enslaved labour in Central America, the Caribbean and Ceylon would copy this indentured labour experiment.

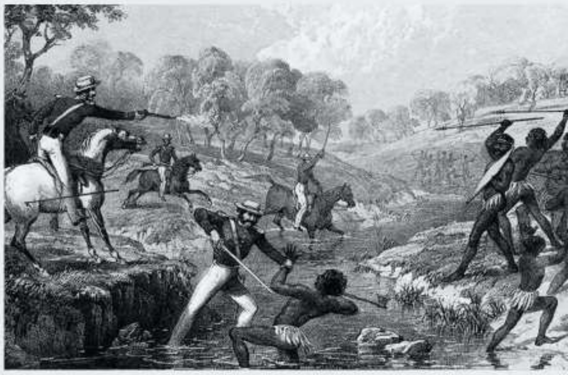


4 **Cape Colony** Afrikaner colonists continued to move across the northern frontier on what later historians called the Great Trek (as shown below in an 1837 engraving), preferring their system of slavery, continued expansion, and self-rule to British governance. The Colonial Office recalled Governor Benjamin D'Urban for refusing to communicate once his annexation of land belonging to the Xhosa people across the eastern frontier was disallowed. The lieutenant governor, Andries Stockenström, was maintaining peace through treaties with the Xhosa people; he was soon sacked after British settlers' lobbying.

BRIDGEMAN/ALAMY



5 **New South Wales** The rapid colonisation of the Port Phillip District (now Victoria) continued as British pastoralists invaded Kulin peoples' lands. Despite the arrival of a handful of Protectors of Aborigines (men appointed by the Colonial Office in order to safeguard the interests of Aboriginal people), the Aboriginal population is estimated to have declined by 90 per cent during the 1840s. In 1838 colonists perpetrated two well-known massacres of Aboriginal people at Waterloo Creek and Myall Creek. The courts hanged seven white men for the latter offence, energising settlers' calls for self-governance.



The 1838 massacre of Aboriginal people at Waterloo Creek by British military. Many Aboriginal people were killed in this year and beyond

MAP BY **PAUL HEWITT–BATTLEFIELD DESIGN**

Meanwhile, as indigenous Mohawk were helping the loyalist militia round up the cross-border raiders in Canada, Aboriginal dispossession was proceeding at an alarming rate in Australia. From Sydney, Richard Bourke, the governor of New South Wales, notified Stephen that he had sent a magistrate after Britons who had taken it upon themselves to settle around Geelong. He placed "the greatest reliance on [the]… humanity, good temper, and considerate disposition" of Foster Fyans. In reality "Flogger Fyans" systematically acquitted settlers accused of killing Aboriginal people, declaring that the only agreeable course of action was to "deal with such useless savages on the spot".

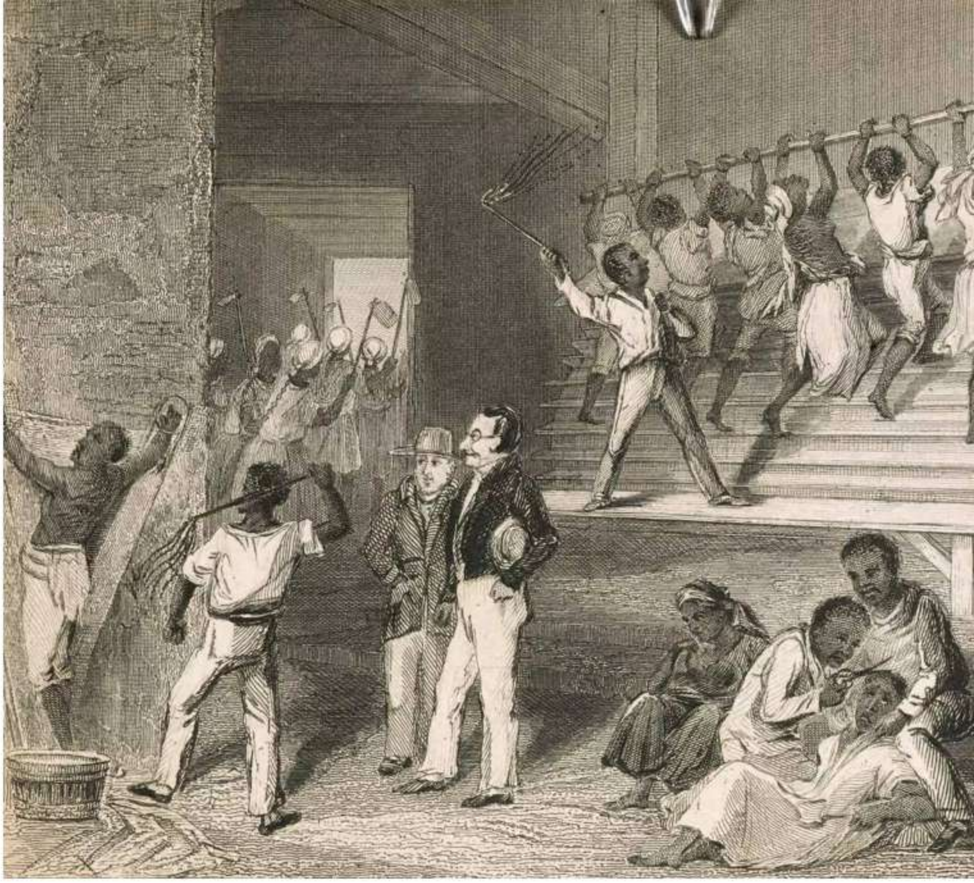
In February, George Gipps replaced Bourke as the governor. The agenda for Gipps' first advisory council meeting included Stephen's instructions for "the just and humane treatment of the Aborigines" alongside a report from Major Nunn who, in January, had led a military force killing over 40 Kaamilaraay men, women and children accused of spearing settlers' invasive sheep. Stephen was at a loss about how to advise the new governor exactly how he should show "humanity" to Aboriginal people while encouraging British settlement on their land.

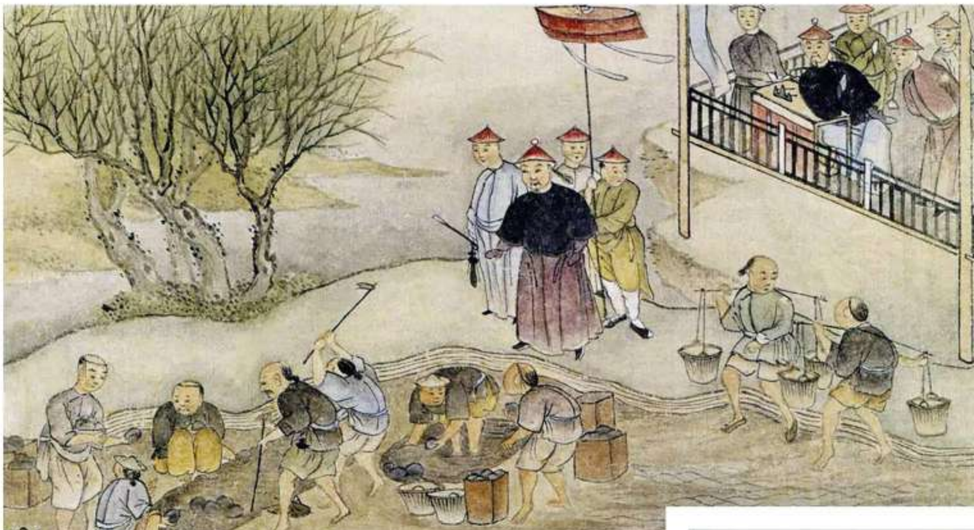
The bureaucrats also had to respond to foreign "threats" to Britain's empire. For instance, in May, Hobhouse panicked upon hearing that a Russian envoy had entered Kabul in Afghanistan in 1837, to attempt an alliance with the Afghan amir, Dost Mohammad. The Foreign Office dictated that the Company had to participate in the "Great Game" contesting Russian imperial expansion across central Asia towards India.

The Company's agent in Kabul believed that the independent-minded amir had no intention of indulging the Russians, but Auckland and Hobhouse were falling under the spell of a rival advisor, William Hay Macnaghten. His suggestion was to overthrow Dost Mohammad and reinstate a compliant former amir, Shah Shuja.

Rebels and murderers

Over in the Colonial Office, Stephen remained preoccupied with Canada. Against his wishes, the government had decided to send out Lord Durham as an appeaser. He arrived in May and proposed later that year that the Canadian settlers be granted representative government based on a low property franchise. Devised at the same time that franchise qualifications were being raised to exclude free people of colour elsewhere, this solution would maintain British emigrants' sense of belonging to the empire. They would govern themselves internally while Stephen's office determined their external relations.



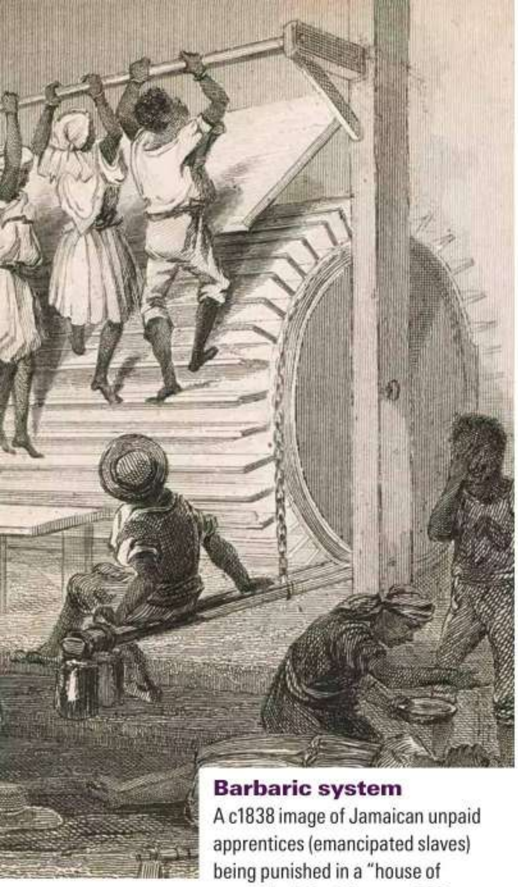


War on drugs

The Cantonese governor Lin Zexu oversees the destruction of illegally smuggled opium, after issuing warnings about its confiscation, 1839. Millions of dollars' worth of Company opium was destroyed, and Britain declared war in retaliation

A new form of servitude

Low-paid Indian indentured labourers arrive in Port Natal, South Africa, to work on plantations in 1860. More than a million Indians were brought into this system



Barbaric system

A c1838 image of Jamaican unpaid apprentices (emancipated slaves) being punished in a "house of correction". On 1 August 1838 apprenticeship came to an end, meaning former apprentices would finally be able to seek paid employment

BRIDGEMAN/DURBAN LOCAL HISTORY MUSEUMS/AKG

The empire developed a template through which exploited people of colour would continue to supply cheap labour to white Britons

In June, Gipps reported that another massacre of Australian Aboriginal people had been committed at Myall Creek. For the first time, white witnesses testified to seeing the corpses of 28 Wirrayaraay women, children and elderly men. Gipps saw an opportunity to demonstrate humanitarian resolve. However, once seven of the white culprits were hanged, previously divided former convicts and free settlers united to press for Canadian-style self-governance, not least so that Australia could be "cleared" for settlement without further philanthropic interference from London.

Meanwhile the philanthropic impulse that had driven the anti-slavery campaign found its fulfilment as "apprentices" around the empire were at last able to seek paid employment on 1 August. Many were able to secure jobs, but they were expected to pay for the first time for plantation accommodation with extremely low wages. It is not surprising that the first impulse for many others was to reunite with family members dispersed among different "owners" and find land upon which they could derive a subsistence together, depriving their former owners of labour.

The drums of war

During September the Foreign Office persuaded Russia to back away from potential conflict in Afghanistan. However, Auckland was committed before he could be called off. On 1 October, he issued the Simla Declaration, pledging to restore Shah Shuja with help from Ranjit Singh's Sikh kingdom. Hobhouse doctored the Kabul agent's dispatches in order to back the governor general in London. Auckland's sister Emily sighed: "Poor, dear peaceful George had gone to war. Rather an inconsistency in his character."

No sooner had Hobhouse committed the government to an unnecessary invasion of Afghanistan than he was confronted by the next crisis. The East India Company had perfected a narcotics industry, obliging Indian tenants to grow opium poppies and remit them to Company agents, who supervised their manufacture. Private companies like Jardine Matheson smuggled the prohibited opium into China through Canton, where officials turned a blind eye. "Only think of the Chinese going to smuggle tea on the coast of England in a junk!" an associate quipped.

However, the Qing emperor was getting serious about suppressing the trade that undermined his authority. In December, a new Cantonese governor, Lin Zexu, threatened to attack British clippers from India unless all the opium on the coast was surrendered. William Jardine, co-founder of Jardine Matheson, complained: "Not an opium pipe [was] to be seen, not a retail vendor... not a single enquiry after the drug." He and his associates set off to London to lobby for war.

The ramifications of British bureaucrats' decisions in 1838 echoed down the years. In Afghanistan, for instance, the regime change that Hobhouse craved was soon accomplished – but what the Duke of Wellington called the "stupidity" of Macnaghten's plan soon became apparent.

Shah Shuja, a puppet whose strings were pulled by infidel foreigners, was never going to become acceptable to Afghanistan's tribal leaders. Fighters lining the Hindu Kush's narrow passes easily cut off supplies and reinforcements to the army supporting him. In 1842 the beleaguered and starving Anglo-Indian garrison accepted an offer of safe passage out, but nearly all were killed as they retreated, Hobhouse's nephew among them.

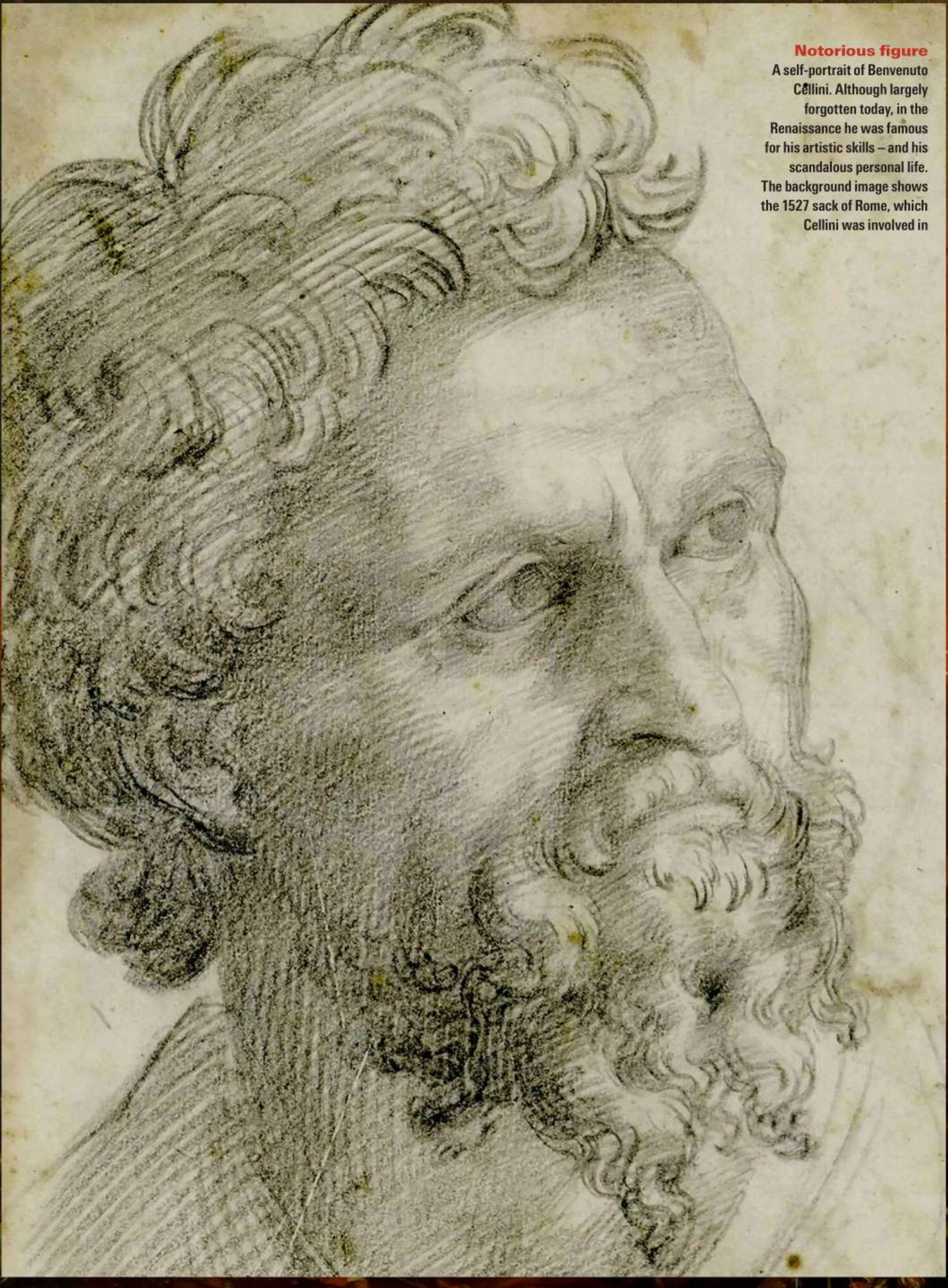
Meanwhile in China, in 1839 Lin destroyed 6 to 10 million dollars' worth of Company opium, prompting Britain to declare war. Hobhouse asserted: "England was not pursuing purely selfish trade ambitions; rather she was fighting for the opening of trade for all nations." The assault resulted in the humiliation of the Qing dynasty, the forced opening of the opium trade through Chinese ports and the seizure of Hong Kong. China's "century of humiliation" at the hands of the west had begun, and we are now witnessing the former empire's reassertion.

In drafting the act ending slavery, Stephen had helped bring one kind of empire to an end. However, he admitted that in the post-emancipation empire, the devastating impact of colonisation on indigenous societies was "clear and irremediable; nor do I suppose it is possible to discover any method by which the impending Catastrophe, namely the extermination of the Black Race, can long be avoided".

At the same time, he was helping devise the means for replacing enslaved peoples' labour (see our annotated map on pages 46–47 for more details on this). In Mauritius impoverished peasants from India were providing planters with cheaper labour than formerly enslaved apprentices. The Colonial Office would liaise with the Company to build an indentured labour system which yielded a diaspora of over a million Indians for colonists' plantations across the globe.

The new British empire developed a template through which people of colour, generally with lesser civil rights, would continue to supply cheap labour to white Britons around the world. H

Alan Lester is professor of historical geography at the University of Sussex. His co-authored book *Ruling the World: Freedom, Civilisation and Liberalism in the 19th-Century British Empire* is out now from Cambridge University Press



Notorious figure
A self-portrait of Benvenuto Cellini. Although largely forgotten today, in the Renaissance he was famous for his artistic skills – and his scandalous personal life. The background image shows the 1527 sack of Rome, which Cellini was involved in

WIKIPEDIA/AKG IMAGES

The supreme scoundrel of the Renaissance

Jerry Brotton tells the sensational story of Benvenuto Cellini, a master goldsmith and sculptor who revelled in violence, sodomy and murder

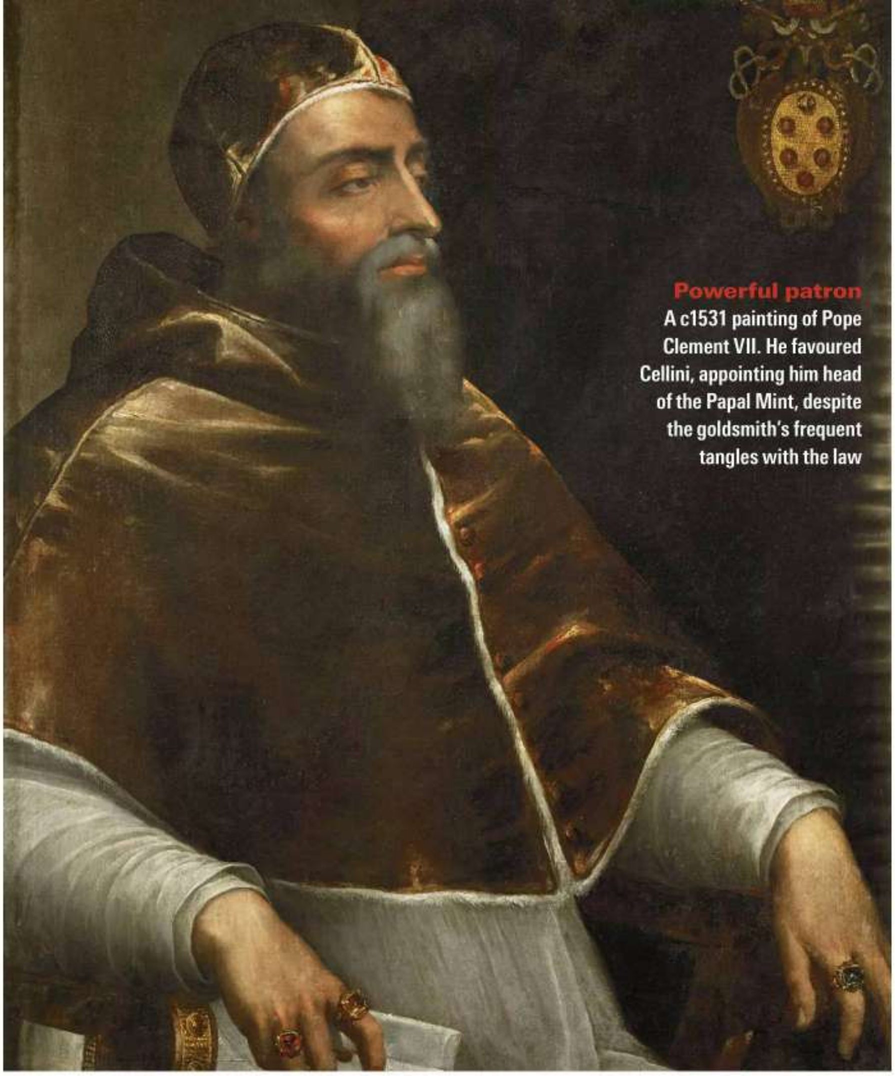
Accompanies Jerry Brotton's 10-part BBC Radio 3 series **Blood and Bronze**

Goldsmith, sculptor, poet, soldier, musician, murderer, necromancer, priest and lover – of men and women. The incredible life and times of Benvenuto Cellini, one of the Italian Renaissance's most extraordinary but now neglected figures, provides a unique perspective on the period. Yet what his surviving art and writings reveal is less an idyllic "golden age" of harmony and beauty, and more a period defined by political turbulence, religious conflict and vicious artistic rivalries.

Although Cellini is now largely overlooked as an artist in favour of his immediate predecessors Leonardo da Vinci (whose position he inherited in France) and Michelangelo (whom he revered), he left behind one of the first – and certainly most dramatic and intimate – autobiographies ever written by an artist. *My Life* (simply entitled *Vita* in the original Italian) is a grandiose, scandalous and boastful account of 16th-century art and society. It is largely based on life in Cellini's native Florence, but it also spans his career spent living and working in the Italian cities of Rome, Venice, Mantua, Ferrara and Siena, as well as Paris and Fontainebleau in France.

The book is a compelling historical document and offers fascinating insights into the period. But no historian takes an autobiography at face value – and rightly so, in this case. By comparing Cellini's *My Life* to the surviving historical records, it seems that his autobiography contains a lot of fact, but also quite a bit of fiction – seemingly to adhere to traditions in writing at the time.

Cellini's autobiography vividly records his fights with his rivals – he killed at least three – while he was also creating some of the greatest sculptures and designs in gold and silver of his day. He survived warfare, imprisonment, poisoning, syphilis and the loss of many of his family to the plague, which was an everyday threat. He befriended kings, popes and the Medici rulers of Florence, who all forgave him his sins to ensure he made art for them. "You should know," said Pope Paul III, "that men like Benvenuto, unique in their profession, need not be subject to the law." Cellini participated in some of the most significant



Powerful patron
A c1531 painting of Pope Clement VII. He favoured Cellini, appointing him head of the Papal Mint, despite the goldsmith's frequent tangles with the law

turning points in the Renaissance in its greatest cities; his violent and passionate life makes the volatile painter Caravaggio look like a choirboy.

Turbulent times

For Cellini, fantasy and reality blurred from the very beginning. His autobiography claims that he was born in Florence "on the night of All Saints' Day at exactly half past four in the year 1500". He was actually born on 3 November, but in trying to create an aura of importance for himself as a great artist, he wanted to share his birth with an auspicious saint's day.

The world into which Cellini was born was already changing politically and artistically. The 15th-century Italian peninsula was never a unified state but rather a series of small republics and principalities primarily ruled by tyrannical *condottieri*, military "contractors" or mercenaries. These powerful figures gave rise to great art, as they commissioned artists to create fantastic pieces for them in city states including Florence, Ferrara, Mantua and Milan. But the Italian Wars, beginning with the French invasion of 1494, changed the political balance of these creatively feuding cities, bringing French and Spanish imperial power into the region, and with it a change in artistic production. Cellini grew up working for the patrons of many of these factions, and it would shape his art.

Initially his father wanted him to follow in his footsteps as a musician working at the Florentine Medici court. Despite becoming an accomplished player of the recorder and cornetto, Cellini, like many aspiring artists before him, chose to train as a goldsmith. As a teenager he worked in Siena, Bologna and Pisa before gaining admission into the prestigious Florentine goldsmiths' guild. In 1523 the first of many accusations of outlawed sexual practices and violence were levelled against him. He was accused of sodomy with Domenico di Giuliano da Ripa, and he also became embroiled in a blood feud with the Guasconti family, admitting that "being somewhat hot-blooded by nature", he "attacked them like a raging bull" and stabbed one of them – for which he was sentenced to death *in absentia*, having already gone on the run.

Cellini fled to Rome and established his own goldsmith's business there. He exploited his Medici connections to obtain the patronage of Giulio de' Medici, who was appointed Pope Clement VII in 1523. But the wider geopolitics surrounding the Italian peninsula would quickly engulf him. In 1527 mutinous troops from the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V's imperial army invaded Rome. The subsequent sack of the city saw an orgy of looting and violence in which up to 25,000 civilians died.

Cellini's violent and passionate life makes the infamously volatile painter Caravaggio look like a choirboy

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Royally minted
A 1537 medal of King Francis I, made by Cellini. The goldsmith moved to France and helped decorate the king's opulent palace in the 1540s

Cellini organised the pope's defences at the Castel Sant'Angelo, doing by his own reckoning "a better job of firing artillery than of being a goldsmith" and even claiming to have shot dead the imperial force's commander, Charles III, Duke of Bourbon. But even in the midst of warfare Cellini was able to aestheticise his experience and profit from it. While "contemplating this unbelievable spectacle and conflagration" he was ordered by the pope to hide his jewels by "extracting them all from the gold in which they were set". He was also instructed to take the gold to "melt it down in as much secrecy as [he] could" before he and the pope fled the city.

Returning to Florence, Cellini found a city that was almost a stranger to him. The Florentines had taken advantage of the turmoil in Rome to banish the Medici and proclaim a republic, and a plague that had swept through the region was ravaging the city's inhabitants. A contemporary observer described the epidemic's impact on Florence: "The neat and beautiful streets which used to be bursting with rich and noble citizens are now stinking… The shops are locked, the

AKG IMAGES/BRIDGEMAN

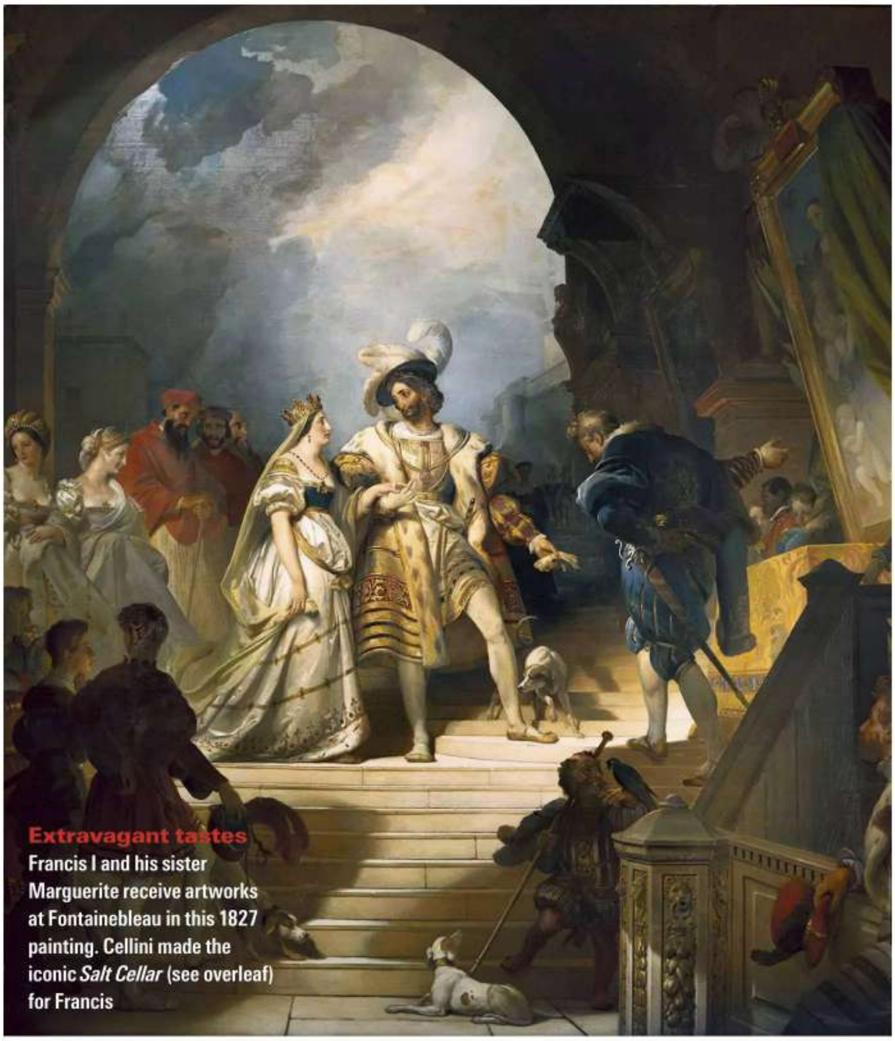
businesses closed… The piazzas and markets, where the citizens used to be in the habit of gathering frequently, are now made into communal graves." The fear of plague, coupled with the exodus from Rome caused by its invasion, led artists to move across Italy, avoiding outbreaks of the disease and obtaining patronage where they could.

Cellini was no different, and the spectre of plague forced him to travel and work in Mantua, Venice, Naples and even Paris, still labouring primarily as a goldsmith. By 1529 the reinstalled pope required Cellini's skills in rebuilding Rome, appointing him to the prestigious role of head of the Papal Mint designing coinage. But the artist's temper soon reared its head again. His brother was murdered, leading Cellini to confront the killer and try "to cut off his head cleanly" before stabbing him so deeply that he could not remove the blade. Despite Cellini's arrest, once again he evaded justice for his crimes. The pope told him that he should apply himself to his work and remain silent.

However, keeping his head down proved almost impossible. As he recounted in *My Life*, he fell for a serving woman and, in an attempt to bewitch her, enlisted the help of a priest and necromancer to conjure devils in the Roman Colosseum. The ceremony involved a 12-year-old virgin servant of Cellini's who watched as "several legions of devils appeared, until the Colosseum was completely filled".

Tall tales and half-truths

This incident is one of the many moments in *My Life* when Cellini's artistic licence got the better of his reportage. His autobiography drew on earlier Italian writers and artists who understood the need to self-consciously concoct events that evoked *terribilità* – awesome and terrifying moments in art and life that shock and amaze the audience or reader. If the devils were not real, then did Cellini conspire with a necromancer? Possibly. Shortly after describing this scene, Cellini writes that he attacked and wounded a notary before fleeing to Naples. Did it really happen, or was it another classic rhetorical move, a description of fantastical and confrontational acts, known as *meraviglioso*?



Extravagant tastes

Francis I and his sister Marguerite receive artworks at Fontainebleau in this 1827 painting. Cellini made the iconic *Salt Cellar* (see overleaf) for Francis

BRIDGEMAN

What was certainly not invented was Cellini's need for patronage. It was his lifeline, and with the death of Pope Clement VII in September 1534, he seems to have realised that his days of papal support were numbered under Pope Paul III, a member of the Farnese family with little interest in backing Medici supporters in Rome. Cellini stabbed and killed another rival goldsmith, Pompeo de' Capitaneis – this time an event recorded in official documents – and he was exiled once again. Eventually the pope absolved him, but anti-Florentine factions within the papacy took against the headstrong goldsmith. Hearing that the French king Francis I was searching for artists to help transform his royal palace of Fontainebleau, Cellini headed to Paris. Unhappy with the indifferent reception he received, Cellini made the fateful decision to return to Rome in 1537.

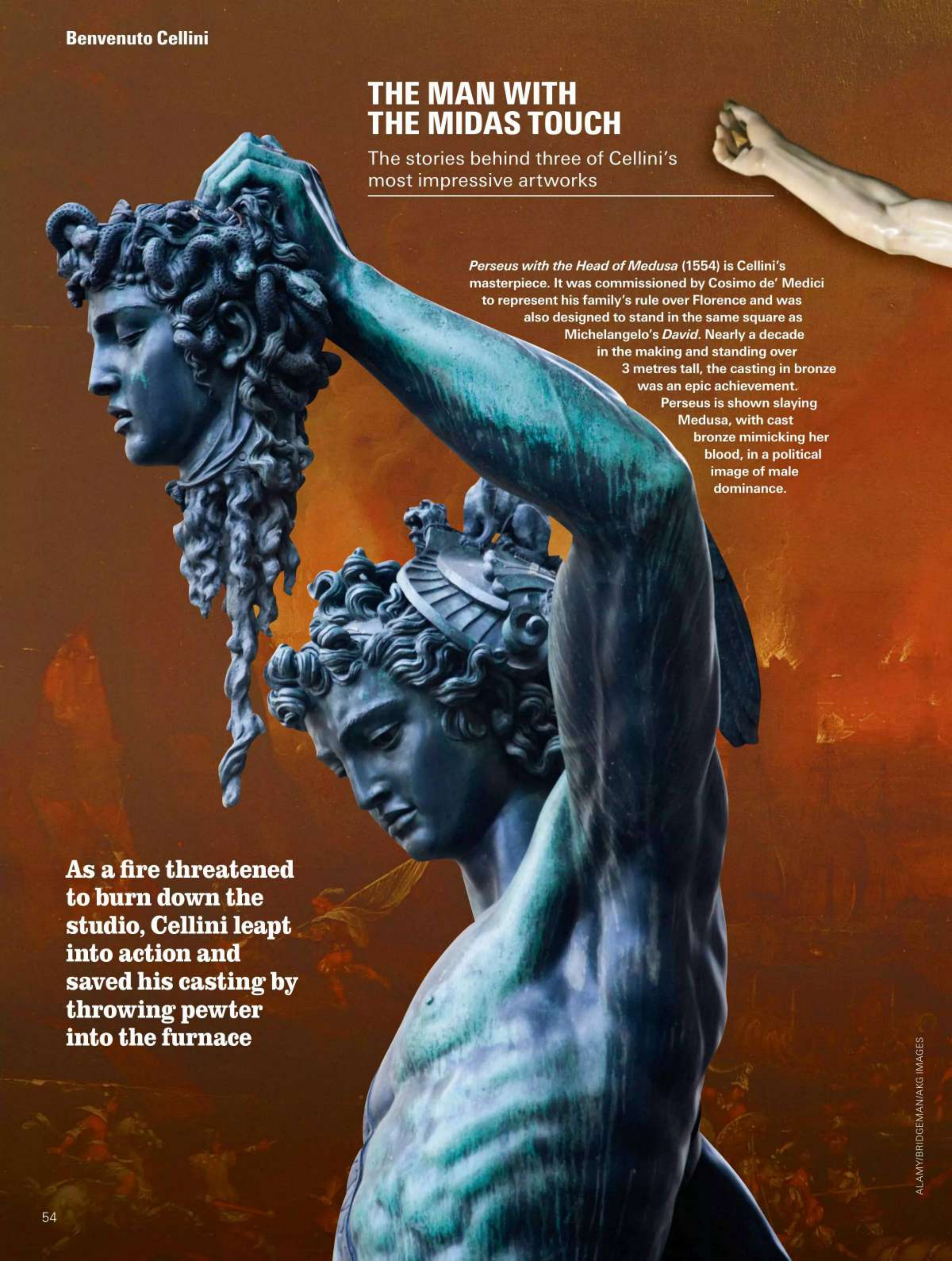
Cellini's nemesis, the pope's son, Pier Luigi Farnese, immediately imprisoned him in the Castel Sant'Angelo he had defended in 1527. The artist was charged with stealing papal jewellery during the Sack. In one of the most graphic and harrowing accounts of imprisonment written in this period, Cellini describes attempts to poison him with ground diamonds and believing he would "end my miserable life" by finding "the means of killing myself". Instead, he read the Bible and seemingly had a miraculous conversion, including hallucinatory visions of Christ in which he was "seized by that Invisible Being and carried away as if by a wind". As papal machinations swirled around him, powerful patrons such as Cardinal Ippolito d'Este Cellini, a clergyman from Ferrara, finally secured his release.

However, it seems that Cellini's account of his ecstatic religious conversion while imprisoned was merely another example of him adhering to the established literary technique of writing his life as a story of earthly sin leading to glorious redemption. The reality was more mundane and violent. Having obtained his freedom, Cellini decided to return to France and the patronage of Francis I. But after leaving Florence he went to Siena, where he killed a postmaster – hardly the contrite actions of a zealous convert.

The years Cellini spent in Paris and Fontainebleau working for the French king were some of his happiest and most productive. He began working on larger sculptural projects at the urging of Francis I, who was keen to show his patronage of the arts rivalled that of the pope and his great adversary, the

THE MAN WITH THE MIDAS TOUCH

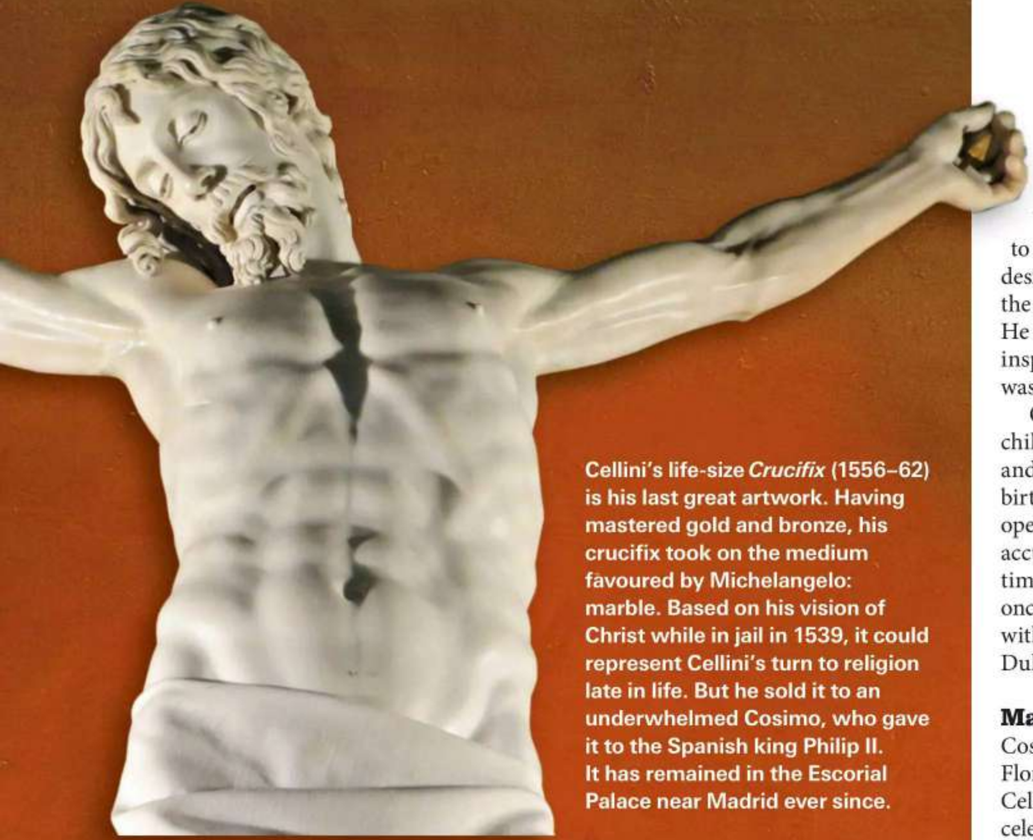
The stories behind three of Cellini's most impressive artworks



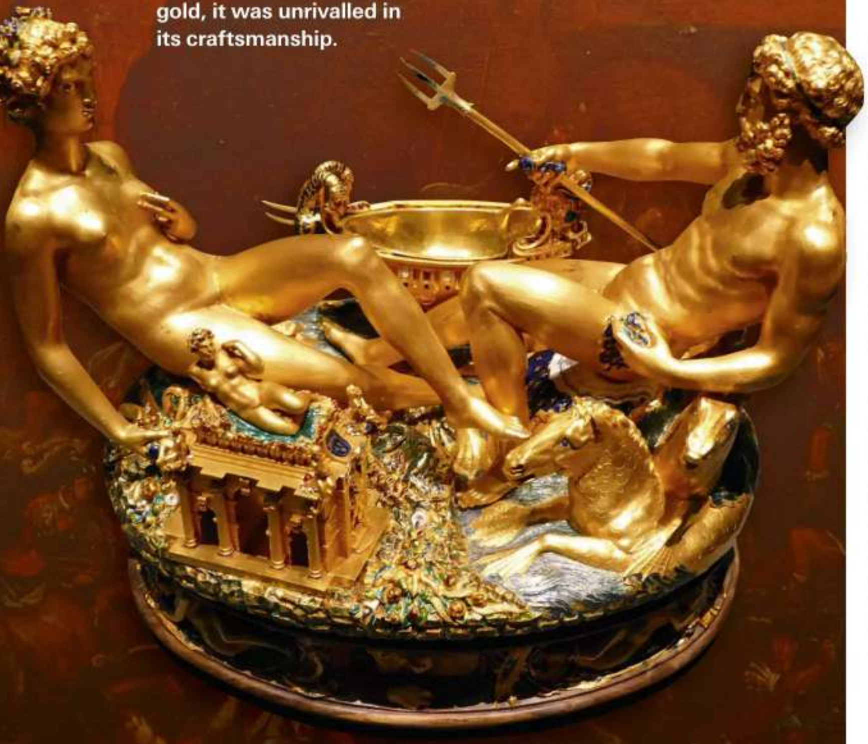
Perseus with the Head of Medusa (1554) is Cellini's masterpiece. It was commissioned by Cosimo de' Medici to represent his family's rule over Florence and was also designed to stand in the same square as Michelangelo's *David*. Nearly a decade in the making and standing over 3 metres tall, the casting in bronze was an epic achievement. Perseus is shown slaying Medusa, with cast bronze mimicking her blood, in a political image of male dominance.

As a fire threatened to burn down the studio, Cellini leapt into action and saved his casting by throwing pewter into the furnace

ALAMY/BRIDGEMAN/AKG IMAGES



Cellini's life-size *Crucifix* (1556–62) is his last great artwork. Having mastered gold and bronze, his crucifix took on the medium favoured by Michelangelo: marble. Based on his vision of Christ while in jail in 1539, it could represent Cellini's turn to religion late in life. But he sold it to an underwhelmed Cosimo, who gave it to the Spanish king Philip II. It has remained in the Escorial Palace near Madrid ever since.



The *Salt Cellar* (or *Saliera*) was made in 1543 for King Francis I during Cellini's time in France. Dubbed the "Mona Lisa of sculpture", it is one of the most iconic and outrageous objects of the Renaissance. It depicts a woman personified as Earth next to a temple for the pepper, and a man representing the Sea beside a ship containing salt. Hand-sculpted in rolled gold, it was unrivalled in its craftsmanship.

AKG IMAGES/ COLIN HEPBURN

Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. Cellini made the extraordinary *Salt Cellar* (see bottom right image), which also appears to have been designed to support Francis's desire to break into the Asian spice market – the cellar contained pepper as well as salt. He also worked on larger, classically inspired sculptures, but as ever, trouble was lying in wait.

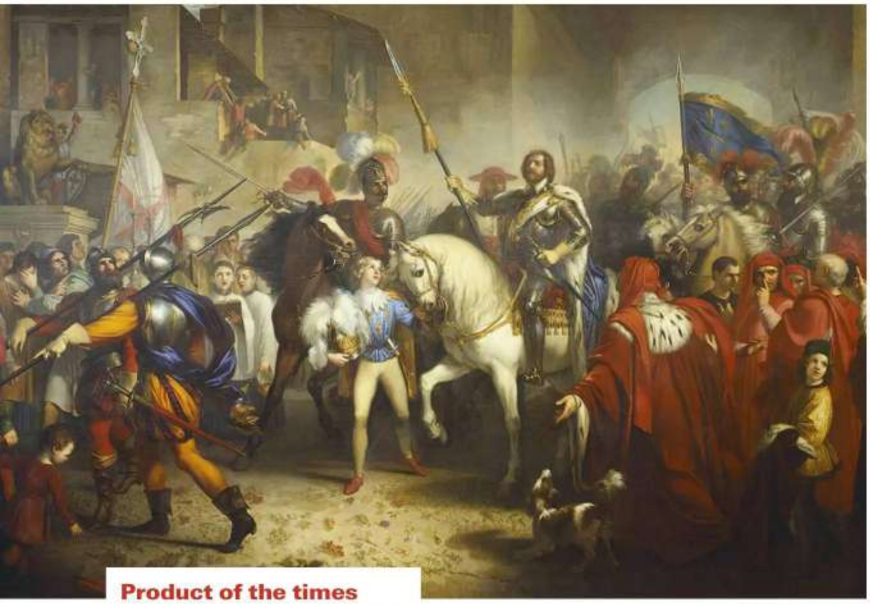
One of his models fell pregnant with his child – a pattern that would play out again and again in his later years – and she gave birth to his first daughter. Cellini quarrelled openly with Francis I's mistress and was accused yet again of sodomy, though this time with a woman. It was time to move on once more. He returned to Florence in 1545 with the prospect of a powerful new patron: Duke Cosimo I de' Medici.

Making his masterpiece

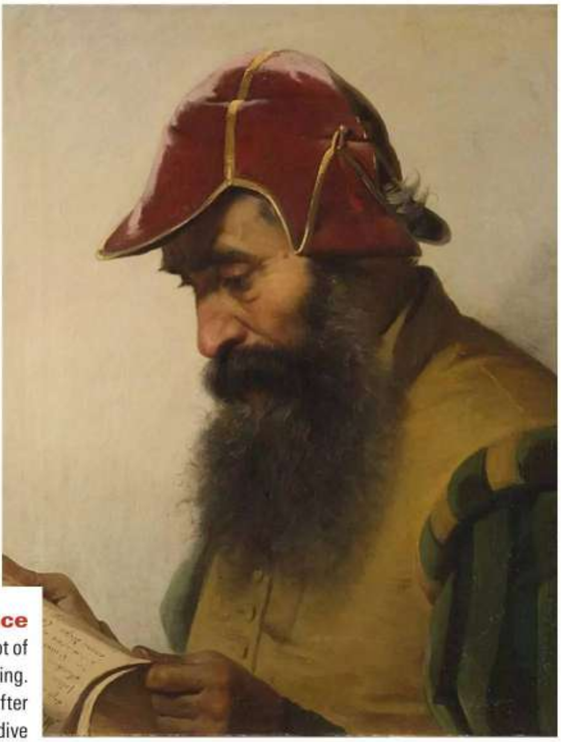
Cosimo had reasserted Medici control in Florence and was eager to commission Cellini to fashion a piece of large public art to celebrate Medici power over the city. He asked Cellini to create a sculpture of Perseus slaying Medusa (see far left image), a classical story that he felt represented the masculine Medici asserting their will over the "feminine", malevolent republican ideals that had characterised the city's recent rule. For nearly a decade Cellini worked on the *Perseus*. Ambitiously, he wanted to cast it in bronze in one piece to outshine da Vinci – who had tried and failed to make a similar bronze statue – and Michelangelo's marble *David*, whose statue stood in the same square where Cosimo wished to display the *Perseus*.

Over the next nine years Cellini worked intensely on the *Perseus* alongside other smaller statues, while still living in a dysfunctional domestic world and quarrelling incessantly with friends, lovers, artistic rivals and even Cosimo. He had a son by another of his models and fought relentlessly with fellow artist Baccio Bandinelli. In one extraordinary scene, Bandinelli accused Cellini of being a "dirty sodomite" in front of Cosimo, after Cellini had ridiculed him for making a statue of Hercules that looked like a sack of melons.

But the *Perseus* loomed large. In one of *My Life's* great climactic moments Cellini describes the casting of the statue. Lying ill in bed with a fever, he is told that the process is going wrong. With a storm raging and fire threatening to burn down the studio, Cellini leaps into action and saves the casting by throwing English pewter into the furnace. "I saw," he wrote, "that we had brought a corpse back to life." On 27 April 1554 the statue was triumphantly unveiled in the Loggia dei



Product of the times
Charles VIII enters Florence in 1494, at the start of the Italian Wars. Cellini's life was as violent and turbulent as the period he lived in



Fall from grace
Cellini reads the manuscript of *My Life* in this 19th-century painting. He wrote his autobiography after his reputation took a nosedive

Lanzi, standing opposite Michelangelo's *David*. The public were astonished; Cosimo was delighted. Perseus is shown holding up the severed head of Medusa, whose look turns those who meet her gaze to stone. Cellini positioned the head so it looked straight at Michelangelo's statue – made of stone, in contrast to his bronze. The point was clear: he had turned Michelangelo to stone and eclipsed his great master.

A tattered reputation

But just as Cellini finally secured the fame and critical adulation he craved, he blew it. In 1556 he attacked and seriously injured yet another rival goldsmith. He was arrested and thrown in jail. Released on bail, just months later in 1557 he was accused once more of sodomy. This time the court records show that the charge came from an apprentice, "with whom he had had carnal intercourse very many times and committed the crime of sodomy, sleeping in the same bed with him as though he were a wife". Perhaps the seriousness of the charges meant that Cellini omitted both accusations in his autobiography, but the court records reveal he pleaded guilty and was sentenced to four years' imprisonment. Cosimo commuted the sentence to a period of house arrest, but Cellini's reputation never fully recovered. He was tainted with the charge of sodomy, and younger artists were eager to take his place.

Ironically, however, the cost of the charges to his artistic reputation inspired the writing of his autobiography. In 1558, as commissions dried up, he began dictating *My Life* to a studio assistant, perhaps as a way of defending his actions and restoring his reputation. He married his servant, but fathered children by models and servants. He turned ostentatiously to religion, working on a life-sized marble crucifix (see page 55), but Cosimo was rather indifferent to it. Cellini was damaged goods, and there were younger, more exciting sculptors available. Cellini withdrew into domestic life, but it remained turbulent and grew increasingly eccentric. He took religious vows but renounced them after a couple of years, presumably finding the life of a priest less exciting than he had hoped.

After attacking a rival goldsmith and facing another set of charges of sodomy, Cellini's reputation never fully recovered

As his influence at the Medici court waned, Cellini still quarrelled with anyone he could. Unsurprisingly another rival, the artist and writer Giorgio Vasari, all but wrote Cellini out of his influential *Lives of the Artists*, which would negatively affect his reputation forever more. Cellini took further refuge in writing, working on treatises about sculpture and goldsmithing. He was appointed to the prestigious Florentine Academy of Design but seemed to use it as a way of fighting even more with other artists, one of whom labelled him "that hopeless lunatic".

Cellini died on 13 February 1571 and was buried two days later in great pomp and splendour in the church of the Santissima Annunziata, with all the ceremony the state could accord him. The funeral oration praised the fine disposition of Cellini's incomparably virtuous life, in one of the many great ironies of this most extraordinary of Renaissance artists. H

Jerry Brotton is professor of Renaissance studies at Queen Mary University of London. His new series on Cellini, *Blood and Bronze*, will air on BBC Radio 3 every weekday evening from 22 March to 2 April

MORE FROM US Jerry Brotton will be discussing Benvenuto Cellini's extraordinary life on our **podcast**. Listen at *historyextra.com/podcast*

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A NEGLECTED LEGACY

Although a select few championed Cellini after his death, he has largely faded into obscurity

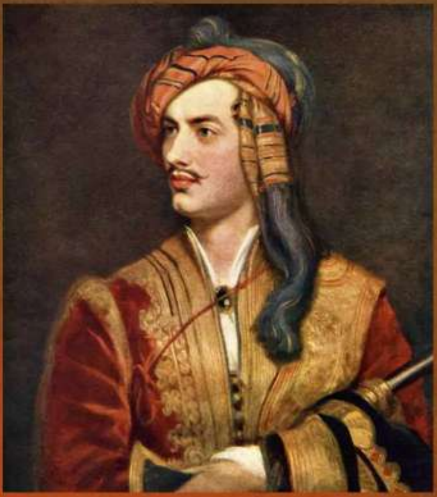
The manuscript of Cellini's autobiography, *My Life,* was largely forgotten following his death, possibly due to its criticism of his Medici patrons, and certainly because many of his artworks had either been destroyed or fallen out of fashion. It was first published in Italian in 1728, followed by an unreliable English version in 1771. A significant shift in appreciation of Cellini came when Goethe translated and published his autobiography in 1796–97, claiming: "I see the whole century far more distinctly through the eyes of this confused individual."

Goethe's translation sparked a wholesale reassessment of Cellini's personal and artistic reputation under the Romantic movement. Lord Byron, always quick to identify with a fellow reprobate, described Cellini in his poetic drama *The Deformed Transformed* (published in 1824) as "A famous artizan, a cunning sculptor; Also a dealer in the sword and dagger." Increasingly Cellini and his writing came to encapsulate Italian life and culture in the Renaissance. The French composer Hector Berlioz was "greatly struck by certain episodes" from the autobiography, which he drew on (somewhat inaccurately) in composing his first opera, *Benvenuto Cellini*, which premiered to a largely hostile reception in 1838. Berlioz's opera climaxed with the dramatic casting of the *Perseus,* as the ultimate symbol of the romantic artist triumphing over adversity in creating art.

The Victorians were even more enthusiastic about Cellini. Painters like John Singer Sargent copied his statues, while writers in the aesthetic movement such as Walter Pater discreetly celebrated him as a pro-gay icon. John Addington Symonds translated *My Life* in 1887, writing that Cellini "was reckless in the indulgence of his sensual appetites… He was not free from the darker lusts which deformed Florentine society in that epoch." He condemned Cellini for enjoying "killing live men quite as much as casting bronze statues", but still concluded that the autobiography was "the first book which a student of the Italian Renaissance should handle". Oscar Wilde adored Cellini as an amoral aesthete, describing *My Life* as an "autobiography in which the supreme scoundrel of the Renaissance relates the story of his splendour and his shame".

In the 20th century, Cellini's volatile life continued to spark interest. In 1924 Edwin Justus Mayer's Broadway play about Cellini, *The Firebrand,* spawned various imitations. Hollywood came calling in 1934, with *The Affairs of Cellini*, a swashbuckling romp starring Fredric March as the romantic lead dressed in tights who spends more time chasing ladies than making art. By 1945 Mayer's play attracted the attention of Ira Gershwin and Kurt Weil. Their operetta, *The Firebrand of Florence,* received the same lukewarm reception as Berlioz's opera.

The last 50 years have seen Cellini anthologised in collections of gay writing, while figures like Terry Gilliam tried repeatedly to make films about him. Otherwise there has been an unfair waning of interest in Cellini – perhaps because his autobiography is just too sensational, and his art suffers unnecessarily in comparison to Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo.



TOP: **Lord Byron, who featured Cellini in an 1824 poetic drama.** MIDDLE: **Oscar Wilde. The writer cherished Cellini and praised his autobiography.** BOTTOM: **Fredric March and Constance Bennett star in the 1934 film *The Affairs of Cellini***

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A NATION IN

As the Office for National Statistics rolls out its 2021 Census of England and Wales, **David Bradbury** and **Boris Starling** reveal what statistics can tell us about seven aspects of British life over the past century – from immigration rates to our changing taste in baby names

The ups and downs of birth rates

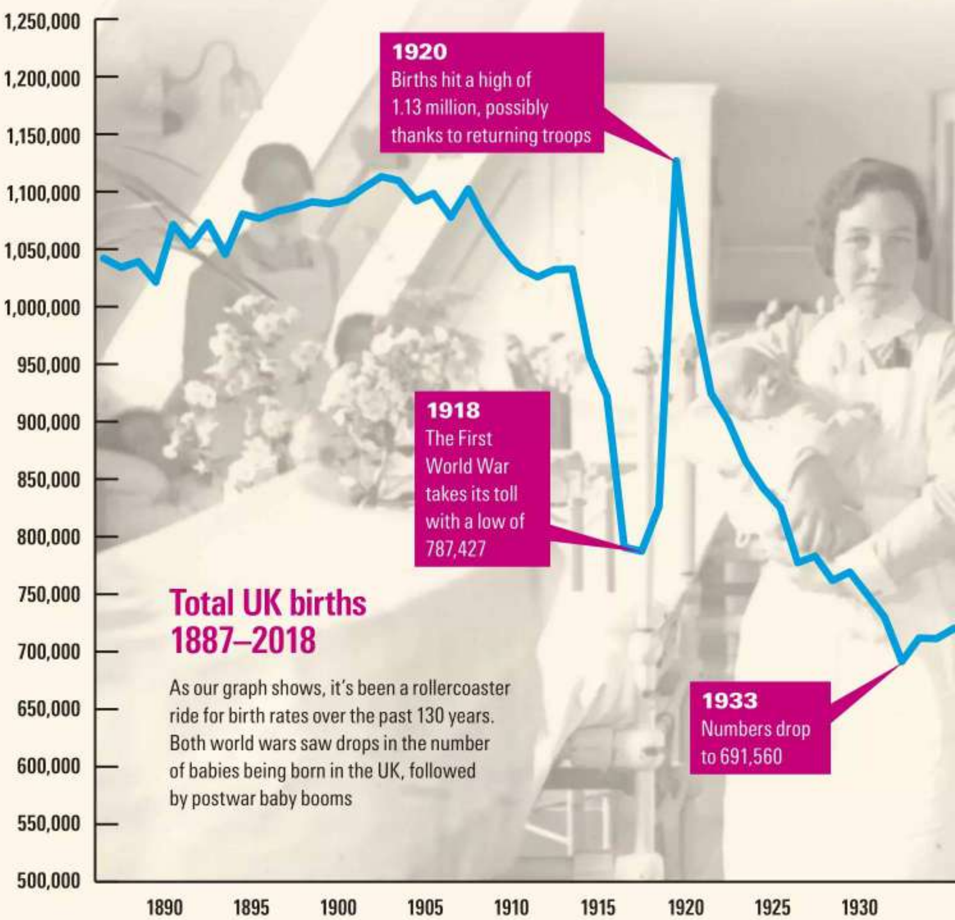
The number of people being born is a fundamentally important statistic – it is, after all, one of the key determinants in the size of the population. The birth rate has generally been on the decline since the turn of the 20th century, not surprising given developments such as the huge fall in the infant mortality rate (15 per cent in 1900; 0.4 per cent in 2018) and the development of reliable contraception.

But this has not been a straight-line decline: the number of births in the UK dipped below a million for the first time in 1915 but, by 1920, had soared back up to 1.1 million, the highest on record. Why the rapid rise? Well, perhaps it was simply the effect of demobilisation bringing couples back together. Or maybe it was a conscious desire to replace the population lost in the war and Spanish flu pandemic.

Birth rates fell again when the country was plunged into war in 1939. However, on this occasion, the number of births did not continue to decline throughout the conflict – it actually bottomed out in 1941.

Famously, the postwar years saw a strong recovery, to the extent that the late 1940s through to the early 1960s became known as the "baby boom".

In the final decades of the 20th century, birth rates fell once more, plunging to a low of 657,038 in 1977, but it has rallied slightly since, reaching a recent peak in 2012 at almost 813,000.



Total UK births 1887–2018

As our graph shows, it's been a rollercoaster ride for birth rates over the past 130 years. Both world wars saw drops in the number of babies being born in the UK, followed by postwar baby booms

1920
Births hit a high of 1.13 million, possibly thanks to returning troops

1918
The First World War takes its toll with a low of 787,427

1933
Numbers drop to 691,560

NUMBERS

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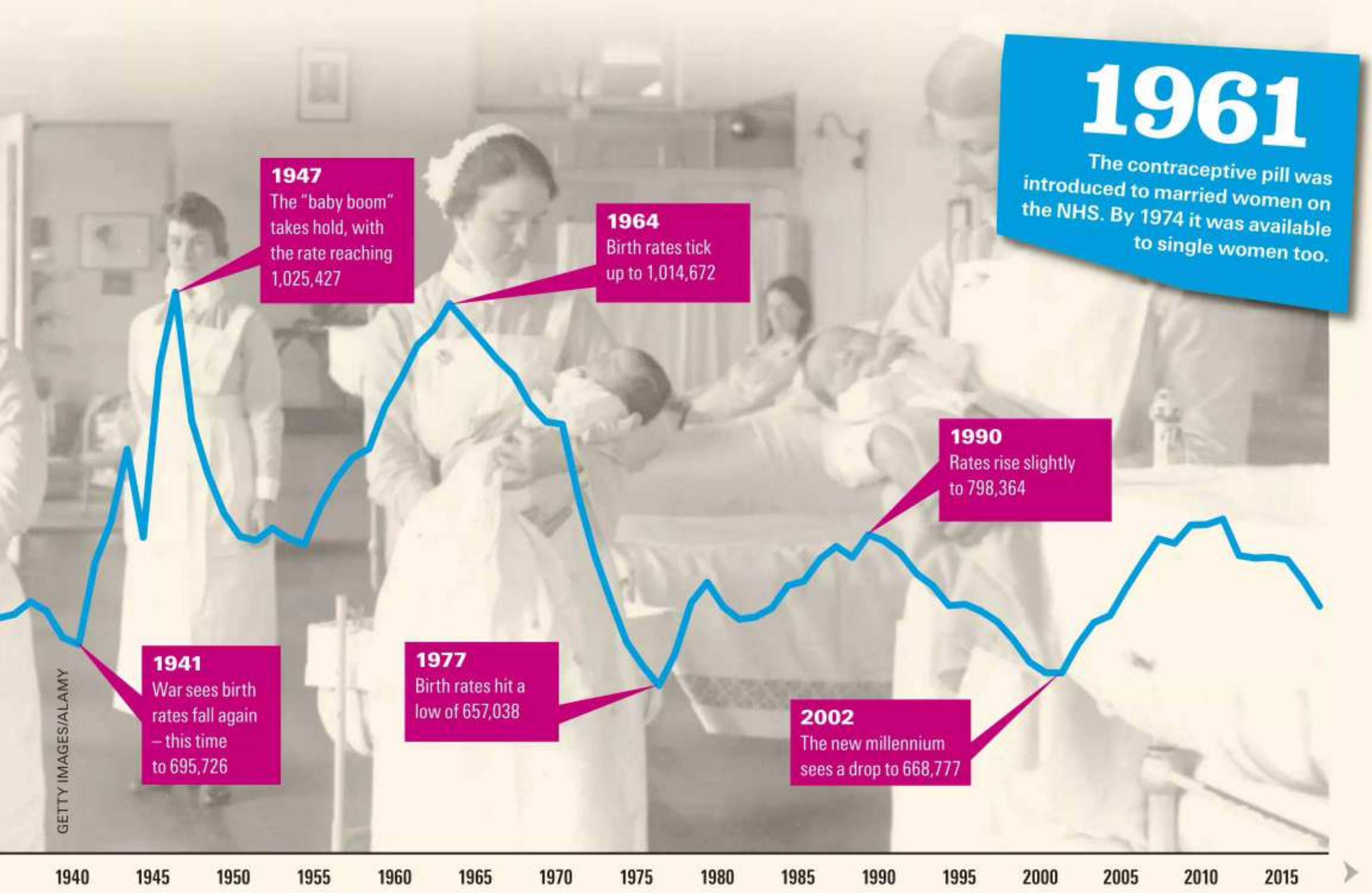

1941
War sees birth rates fall again – this time to 695,726

1947
The "baby boom" takes hold, with the rate reaching 1,025,427

1961
The contraceptive pill was introduced to married women on the NHS. By 1974 it was available to single women too.

1964
Birth rates tick up to 1,014,672

1977
Birth rates hit a low of 657,038

1990
Rates rise slightly to 798,364

2002
The new millennium sees a drop to 668,777

1940
1945
1950
1955
1960
1965
1970
1975
1980
1985
1990
1995
2000
2005
2010
2015

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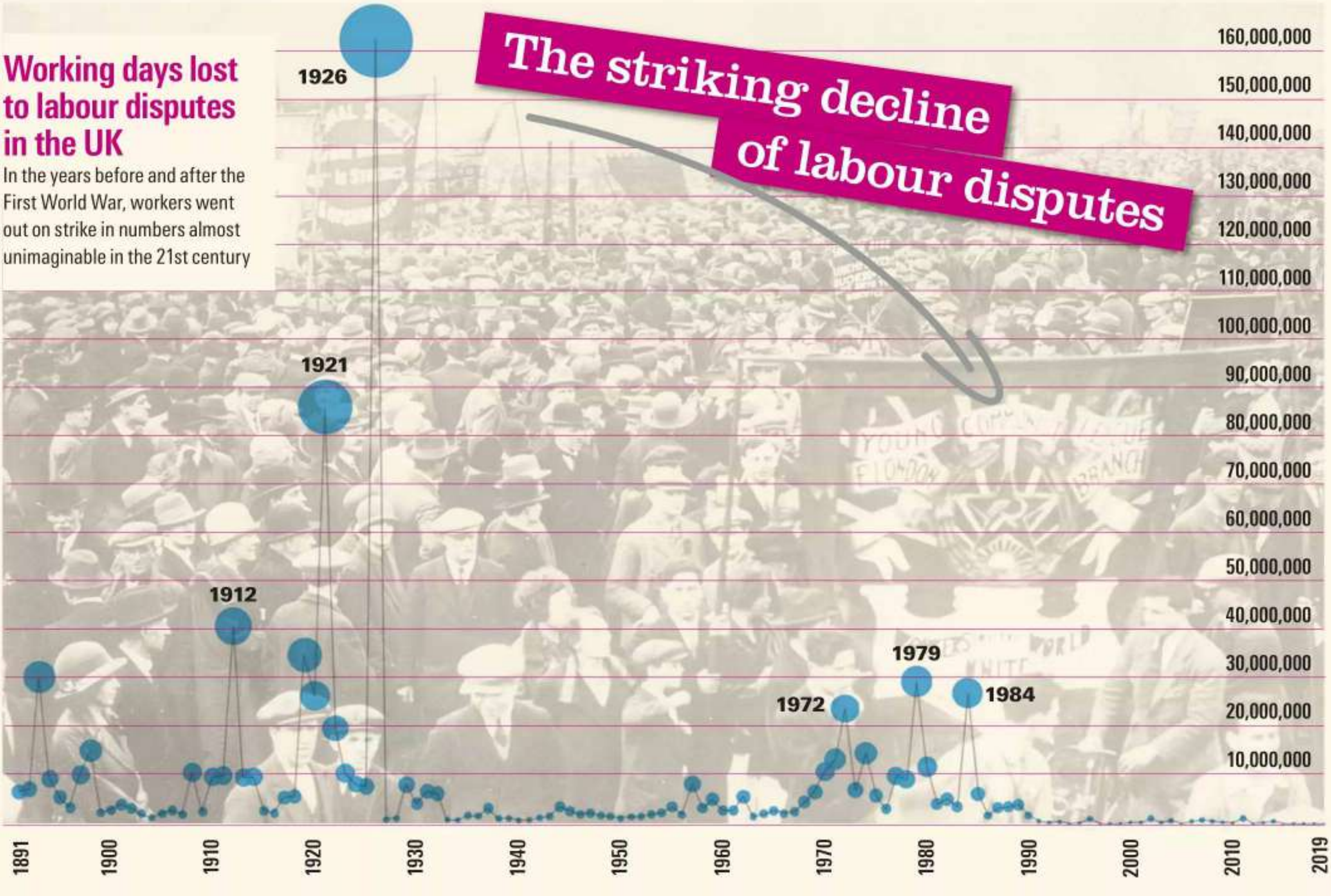
The striking decline of labour disputes

Working days lost to labour disputes in the UK

In the years before and after the First World War, workers went out on strike in numbers almost unimaginable in the 21st century



It won't surprise many readers that 1926, the year of the General Strike and a long-running miners' strike, saw more working days lost to labour disputes than any other since records began. Equally, you probably won't be shocked to discover that a more recent peak occurred in 1984, a year that saw another high-profile miners' strike.

You may be surprised, however, to learn exactly how much labour unrest there was before and just after the First World War: in terms of days lost, 1921 was second only to 1926, followed by 1912. This suggests that, even before the trauma of conflict, the working class were not prepared to put up uncomplainingly with their lot. In fact, it could be argued that the year in which official figures began to be collected (1891) was itself a reaction to a glut of famous disputes, among them the match girls' strike of 1888 and the dockers' strike the next year.

The First World War *did* see a reduction in unrest as the energies of the country turned to the war effort – but only up to a point. 1917, the year of Passchendaele, saw 5.6 million days lost to strikes – that's more than 20 times the 234,000 days lost in 2019.

Since the 1970s and 1980s the labour market has been transformed in a number of ways, among them a decline in manufacturing jobs (down from 6.7 million in 1978 to 2.7 million in 2019) and in trade union membership (down from a peak of 13.2 million in 1979 to 6.4 million in 2019).

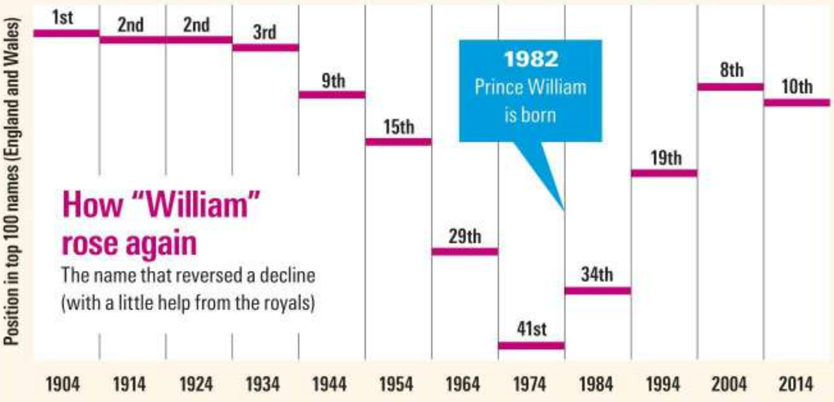
Alongside these changes, the number of days lost to strikes has fallen to a fraction of what it was three or four decades ago, with 2005 seeing a record low of just 157,000 days lost.

What's in a name?

In recent decades the range of names we give our children has been broadening as parents seek to stand out from the crowd. In England and Wales in 1996, three-quarters of boys and three-fifths of girls were given a name from that year's top 100; by 2018 it was less than half for boys and two-fifths for girls. That trend hasn't stopped some stalwart names (such as William) enjoying a renaissance.

How "William" rose again

The name that reversed a decline (with a little help from the royals)



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The ins and outs of migration

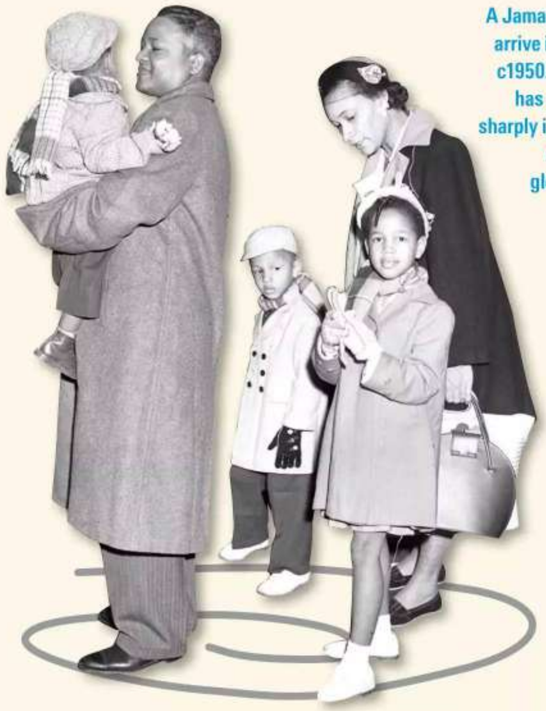
Immigration and emigration have both been on the rise over the past few decades. Given that we now live in an age of full-blown globalisation – when even the world's most far-flung climes are nothing more than a flight away (or at least they were before Covid-19 struck) – this is hardly a surprise.

This phenomenon is reflected in the statistics. In the latter decades of the 20th century, the number of people emigrating – that is, on our definitions, moving abroad for at least a year – was running between 200,000 and 300,000 a year. That figure has now risen to about 300,000–400,000.

In the 1960s and 1970s the number of people migrating to the UK every year was generally slightly lower than those emigrating, so producing a downward effect on the overall population of the country. However, immigration has grown more strongly than emigration in the last two or three decades, and in recent years has been running at about 600,000 a year. The last time there was net emigration was 1992.

It's notable that, while work remains a major reason for both immigration and emigration, the number of people coming to the UK to study increased from fewer than 30,000 in 1977 to more than 220,000 in 2019, while the number of people going to study abroad barely increased.

As a result of these changes, the composition of the population has become far more cosmopolitan. In 1951, less than 5 per cent of the population of England and Wales had been born abroad; by 2011, this figure had risen to more than 13 per cent.



A Jamaican family arrive in England, c1950. Migration has since risen sharply in the wake of growing globalisation

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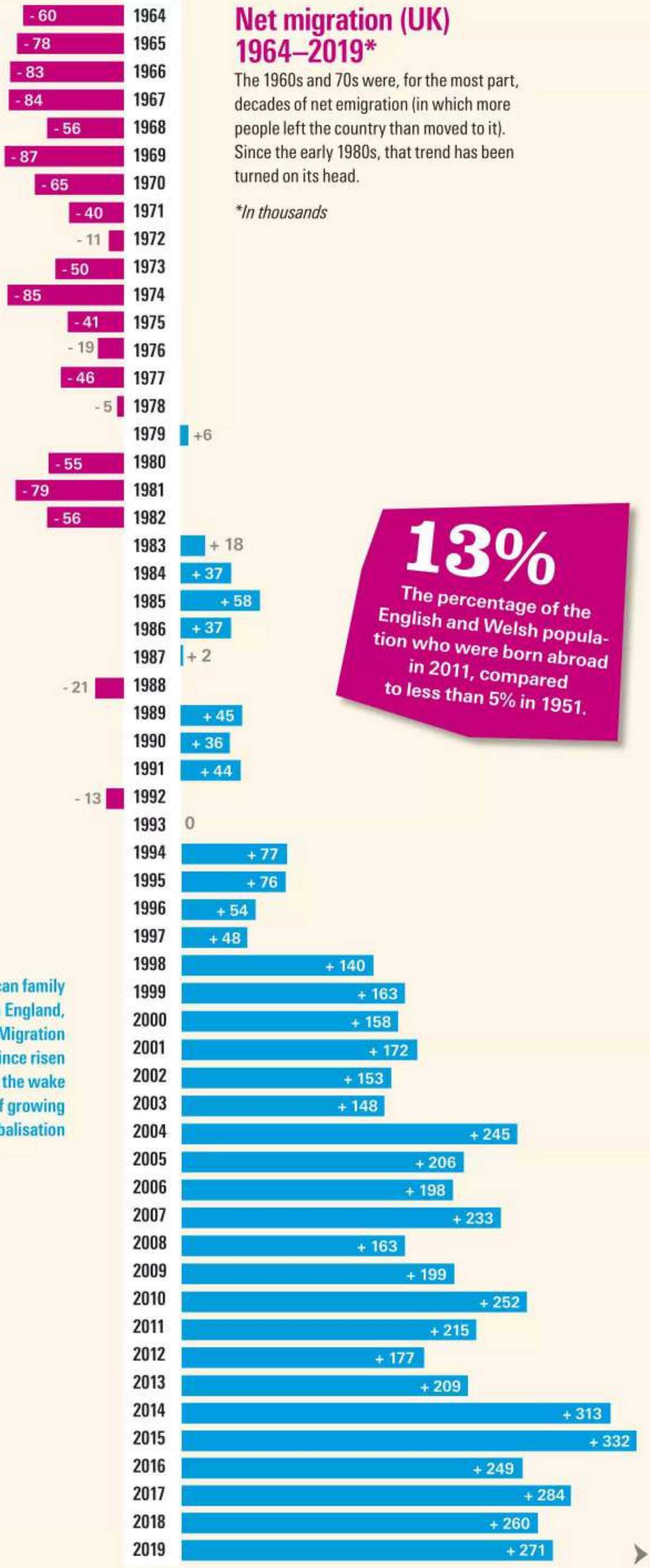


Net migration (UK) 1964–2019*

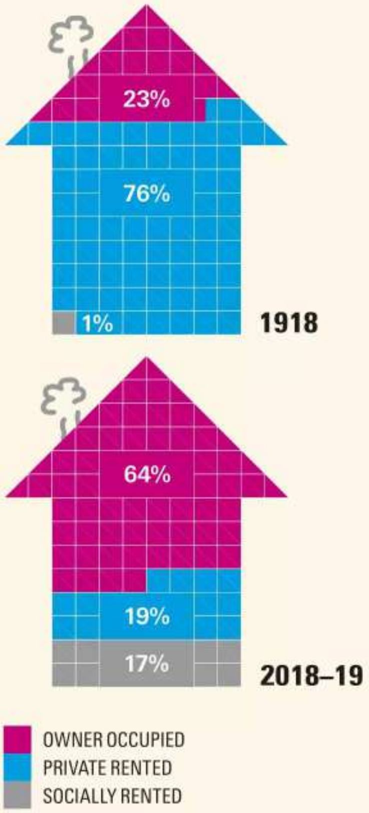
The 1960s and 70s were, for the most part, decades of net emigration (in which more people left the country than moved to it). Since the early 1980s, that trend has been turned on its head.

**In thousands*

13%

The percentage of the English and Welsh population who were born abroad in 2011, compared to less than 5% in 1951.

Own? Rent? Buy-to-let? Property's ever-changing landscape



The property picture

In England, the allure of home-ownership has grown over the past century, while the private rented sector has declined sharply

Do you own or rent the home you live in? How you answer that question will have a major influence on your life. Opinion polls suggest that Britons overwhelmingly aspire to be home-owners, but in recent years the proportion of those who realise that ambition has fallen.

Over the past century, there have been significant shifts in housing tenure. At the end of the First World War, over three-quarters of people in England lived in rented accommodation, virtually all of it rented privately. But soon that figure was in a sharp decline. In fact, the second half of the 20th century saw a strong growth in the number of owner-occupiers in England; by 2001, they accounted for nearly 70 per cent of the total.

The proportion of English properties that were socially rented (from local councils or housing associations) also surged in the postwar years – and, by 1981, had reached almost a third of the total. But then that growth was sent into reverse. No doubt this was partially the result of Margaret Thatcher's decision to allow council tenants the right to buy their homes – resulting in 1.8 million properties being sold in the last 40 years.

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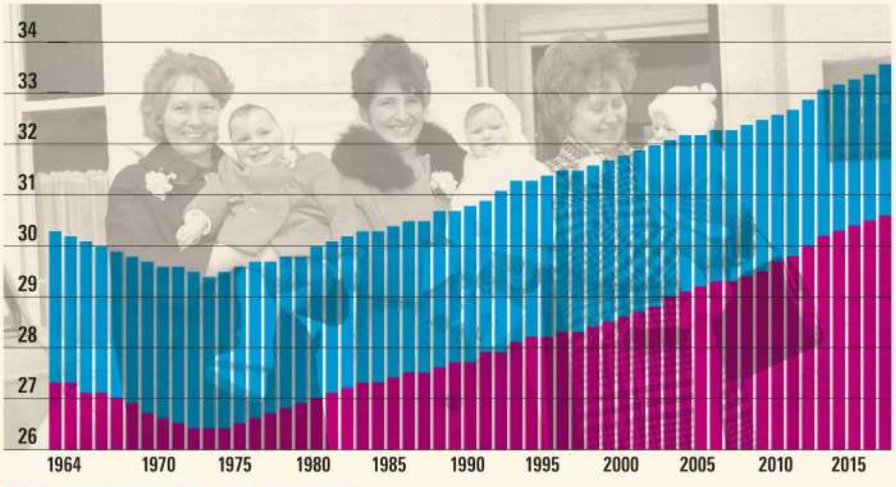
For sale signs in London, c1942. The 20th century "saw significant shifts in housing tenure"

And what of the private rented sector? About 30 years ago, this one-time powerhouse of the housing market accounted for just one in 10 of all English properties.

That figure has since doubled, undoubtedly assisted by the availability of "buy to let" mortgages, and a rise in the real price of residential property. While average pay has risen by 45 per cent in the past 15 years, it's been outstripped by house prices, which have surged by 57 per cent.

The rise of the older parent



The average age of parents

As our graph shows, the average age of women in England and Wales in 2018 when they gave birth was four years older than their predecessors in the mid-1970s

Parents are, on average, older now than at any point since records began. The average age of women in England and Wales when they gave birth reached a high of 30.5 in 2018, while fathers were, on average, almost exactly three years older again. (Note that this figure applies to *all* births, not just first births).

The ageing parent is nothing new: in fact, mothers and fathers have been getting gradually older for the past 50 years. But, before that, the figures generally moved in the opposite direction.

In England and Wales, statisticians began recording mothers' ages in 1938, and throughout most of that earlier period, the figure fell – from age 29 in that first year to below 26.5 in the mid-1970s. An exception to this trend occurred during the dislocation of the Second World War.

Once the data for the age of fathers starts (1964), a similar picture emerges – declining into the mid-1970s and rising thereafter. Interestingly, the gap between the ages of mothers and fathers seems to remain pretty constant at about three years throughout the entire period.

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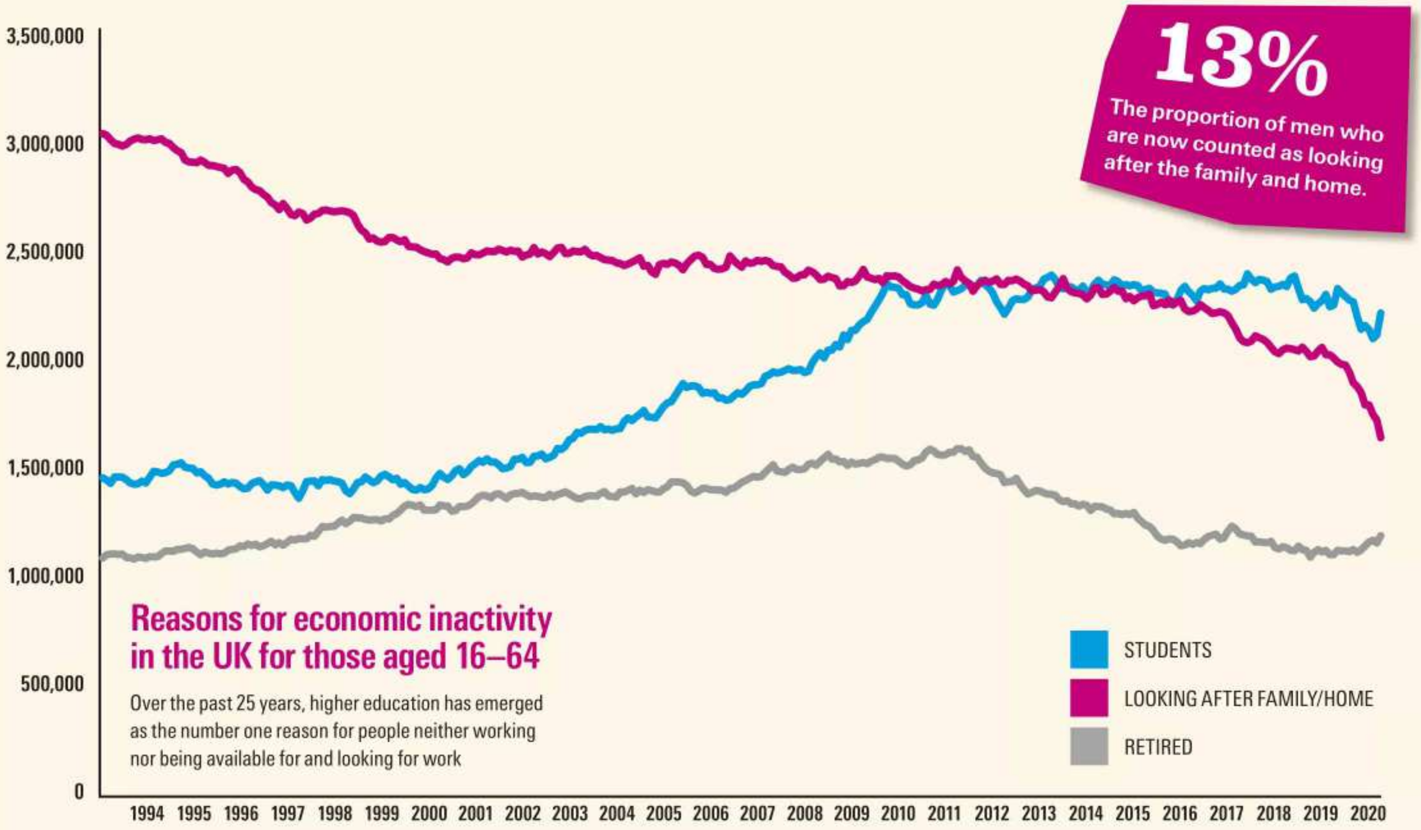

13%

The proportion of men who are now counted as looking after the family and home.

Reasons for economic inactivity in the UK for those aged 16–64

Over the past 25 years, higher education has emerged as the number one reason for people neither working nor being available for and looking for work

Students multiply…

But where are all the housewives?

The term "economic inactivity" is a bit of a mouthful, but in effect it refers to people who are neither working nor available for and looking for work. What are the reasons for "economic inactivity"? Many older people, of course, have simply retired. But what about those of working age?

What we think of as "working age" has undoubtedly altered over time – thanks to changes, for example, in the school leaving age – but let's take 16–64 as the benchmark.

Over the past 25 years or so, the reasons that people have cited for their "economic inactivity" in our Labour Force Survey have changed dramatically. Many of these changes have been triggered by the huge growth in the country's student population. Until the early years of the 21st century, the number of people in the UK who were inactive because they were students remained fairly stable, at around 1.5 million. Then it climbed rapidly, peaking at around 2.5 million in 2010, before plateauing and falling slightly. Muddying the waters slightly is the fact that not all full-time students count as inactive. They might also have, or be looking for, a part-time job, and so could count as employed.

The number of people who count as economically inactive in the UK because they are looking after their family or home has declined from about 3 million since the early 1990s to barely half that figure. However, the proportion of men among them has risen from about 4 per cent to more than 13 per cent in that time.

Meanwhile the number of 16–64s who say they're retired has dropped in recent years. This decline has chiefly occurred among women, undoubtedly because they no longer qualify for state pension at 60. **H**

A dad makes lunch with his daughter. The proportion of men not working because they are looking after their family or home has risen sharply

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David Bradbury is senior media relations officer at the Office for National Statistics. **Boris Starling** is a novelist, screenwriter and journalist. David and Boris have co-written *The Official History of Britain: Our Story in Numbers as Told by the Office for National Statistics* (HarperCollins, 2020)

Q&A

A selection of historical **conundrums** answered by experts

How did people in hiding communicate with confidants before modern means of communication?

Richard Marsh

››› In the 17th century it was practically impossible to hide without at least one person knowing where you were – even Jesuits in priestholes needed food and water. A prisoner might have short messages smuggled into gaol hidden in an egg, while longer missives could be folded into packages small enough to secrete in a lady's wig.

In a society more porous than today's, outgoing letters could be delivered by private bearer (perhaps accompanied by an oral message), or via clandestine networks of individuals who could travel without suspicion, such as apothecaries and nurses. Letters might also travel through more official channels to neutral destinations to an individual using a codename (Susan Hyde, a royalist spy during the Interregnum, used "Mrs Simburbe"), or from where an enclosure, a letter hidden within a letter, could be forwarded.

Before the 19th-century invention of the modern gummed envelope, letters formed their own packaging, a folding technique known as "letterlocking". Some "locks" were highly elaborate, rendering a letter impossible to open without damaging it – Charles I recognised letters from one of his female spies "by their folding" alone. Cromwell's spymaster John Thurloe had a "Black Chamber" dedicated to intercepting, opening, transcribing and resealing letters before sending them on their way.

Even if intercepted, a letter might hide its secret meaning behind substitution ciphers or its secretive nature with invisible inks or mercantile discourse ("our trade is slow" meant "we are being watched"). Keeping communications secret was no easy task, but it could be the difference between defeat and victory.

Dr Nadine Akkerman, author of *Invisible Agents: Women and Espionage in 17th-Century Britain* (Oxford University Press, 2018)

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Once upon a time...
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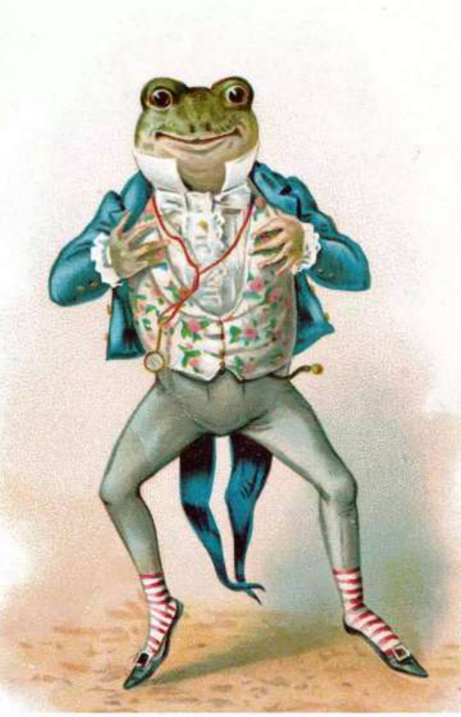


A frog on a French postcard, c1890s. The origins of the English calling the French "frogs" may lie in the early medieval era

MARY EVANS

Why do the English call the French "frogs"?

Christine Oakland

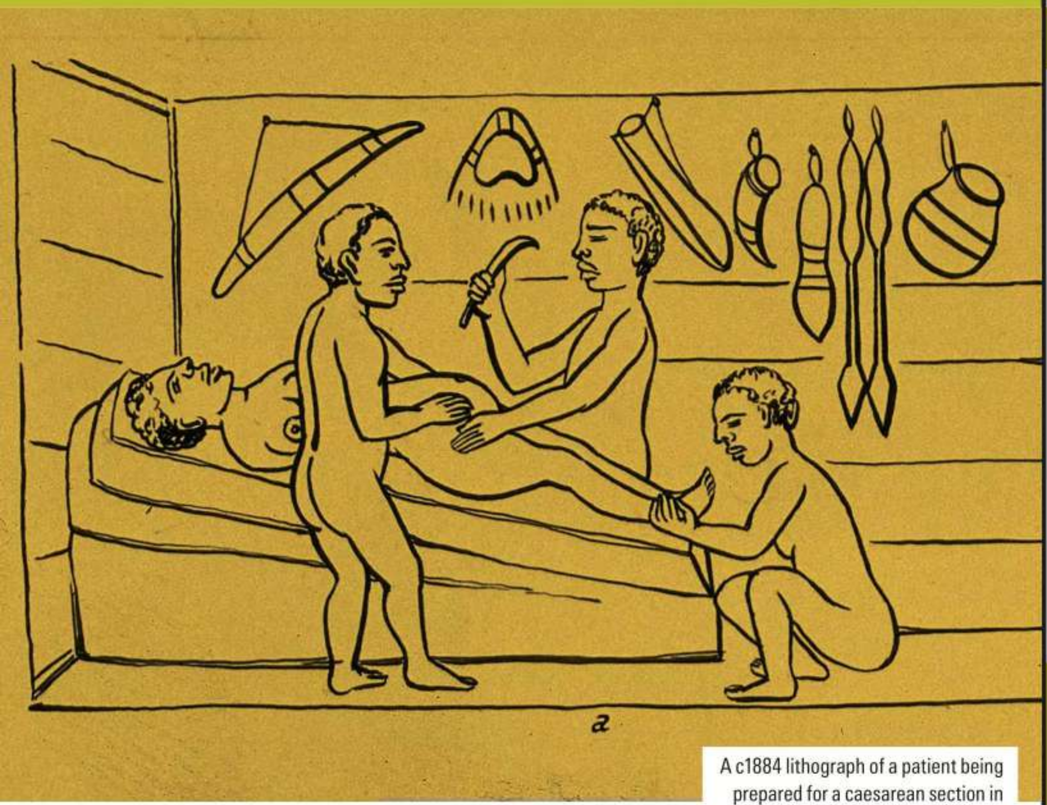
››› There's probably no definitive explanation. It's been said that French can sound to some like the hoarse or hawking noises of frogs, and in the 18th and 19th centuries the "rosbif"-eating English despised people who ate the legs of amphibians.

However, your 17th-century Englander called the *Dutch* "frogs" or "froglanders" because the Netherlands were wet, marshy and apparently full of frogs, while the French called Parisians "grenouilles" – frogs – as Paris, too, was low-lying and muddy.

In the 1800s Brits mixed their xenophobic taxonomy, also disparaging their Gallic neighbours as "crapauds" (the French for "toads") or "Johnny Crapaud".

In fact, the tradition of calling the French "frogs" could go all the way back to the Frankish king Clovis I (died 511), who supposedly used three toads (or frogs) as an emblem but changed it to three *fleurs de lys*. On a banner or a shield, the *fleur* might have looked a bit like a frog seen from above. Or a toad.

Eugene Byrne, author and journalist specialising in history



A c1884 lithograph of a patient being prepared for a caesarean section in Uganda. It was reported that local surgeons using herb-based medicines successfully performed these operations

What are the origins of the caesarean section?

››› In many cultures and religions in the ancient world – from China to India, Egypt to Rome – we find accounts of an exceptional caesarean operation delivering the hero or prince of a nation, but it is almost impossible to determine their historical foundations.

The Latin author and naturalist Pliny the Elder reported that a Roman emperor was delivered by a caesarean; later authors assumed this may have referred to the birth of Julius Caesar. However, since his mother, Aurelia, survived for more than 40 years, this is probably another legend. What is certain is that ancient Roman law required, under the *lex caesarea*, that if a mother died while pregnant or giving birth, the foetus should be cut from her womb. The term "caesarean" may derive from the Latin verb to cut (*caedere*) or from the imperial title (*Caesar*).

With the development of anatomical dissections in early modern Europe, there was renewed interest in the viability of caesarean sections in extreme cases to save the life of the mother and unborn child. A Swiss pig gelder, Jacob Nufer, was reported to have undertaken one in 1500 to save his wife and child. In the 1580s, there was a vigorous debate about their viability headed by the physician François Rousset, who toured France interviewing surgeons and women to collect evidence of rare but successful caesarean sections.

However, in an age without anaesthetics or regular antiseptic measures, most attempts ended in the death of the mother, and so the procedure was almost universally abandoned – particularly when the introduction of forceps in the 17th century offered an alternative for obstructed labours. It was not until the late 19th century that caesareans re-emerged in western medicine. There were also contemporary reports of local surgeons practising them successfully in Uganda and Rwanda, using herb-based medicines and alcoholic anaesthetics derived from local plants.

……

Valerie Worth-Stylianou, editor of *Pregnancy and Birth in Early Modern France* (University of Toronto Press, 2013)

WELLCOME IMAGES/ALAMY/LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

DID YOU KNOW…?

Loaf and master

Our modern word "lord" can be traced back etymologically to an Anglo-Saxon one which literally means "guardian of the loaf". The Anglo-Saxon *hlafweard* was contracted to *hlaford* and then, in the Middle Ages, mutated into the feudal term "lord". Its origins reflect the responsibility tribal chieftains once had to provide bread for all their followers, and the central role bread played in their diet. Similarly, "lady" comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *hlaefdige*, meaning "someone who kneads the loaf".

Kick up the backside

A 1631 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* resulted in the actor playing Bottom sitting in the stocks for 12 hours, still wearing his ass's head. In a time of increasing puritanism, the play had been performed on a Sunday, and religious zealots secured the conviction of the actor, a Mr Wilson. Wilson was placed in the stocks with a bale of hay in front of him and a placard stating that he had made a "silly ass" of himself.

Pretty penny

In 2003, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs was still paying out a monthly military pension of $70 to the widow of a Union soldier who had fought in the American Civil War, which ended in 1865. Gertrude Janeway had married her husband, John, a former officer in the 14th Illinois Cavalry, in 1927 when he was 81 and she was 18. She lived to be 93, and the civil war pension was therefore paid out in three different centuries. **H**

……

Nick Rennison, writer and journalist specialising in history

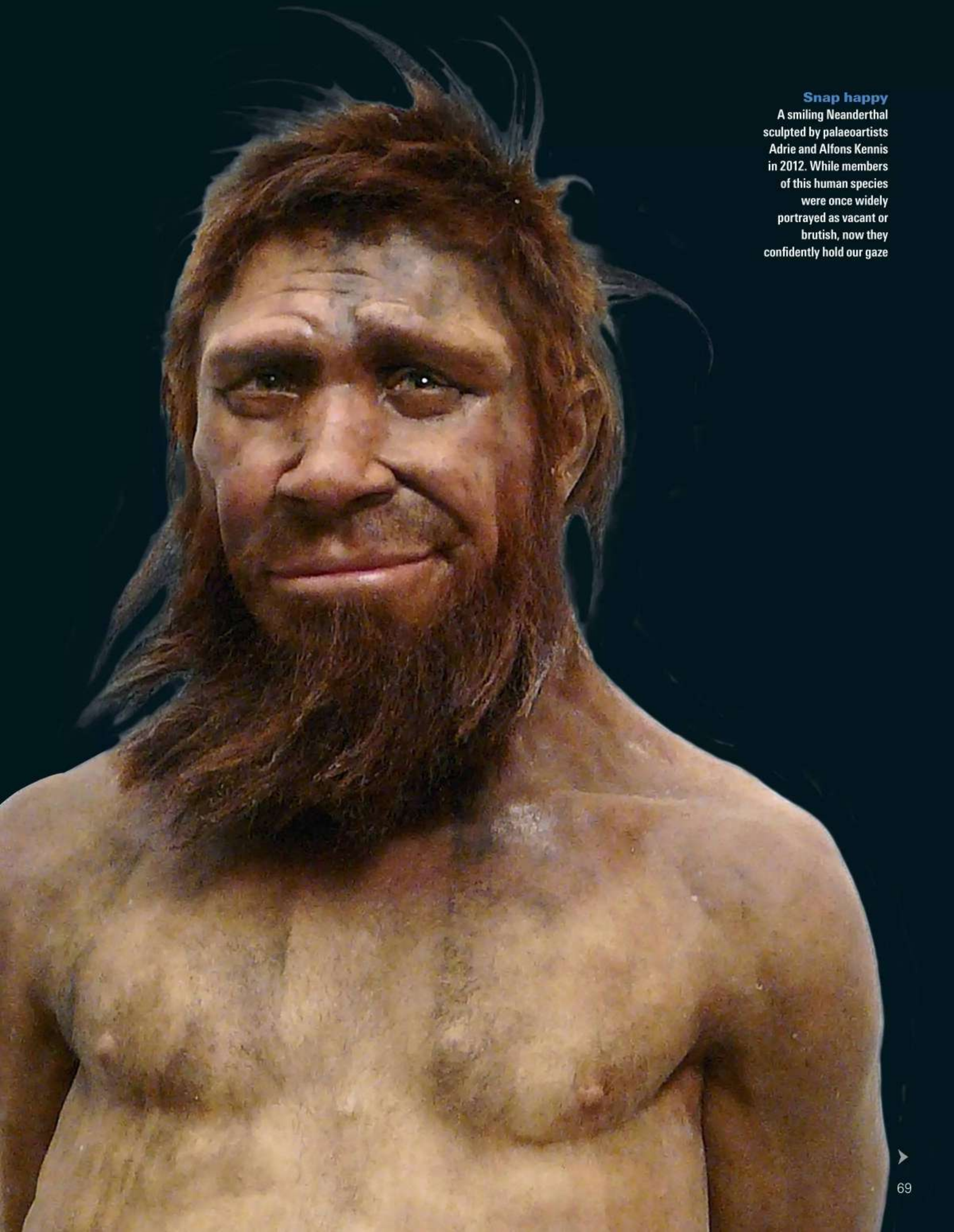
Philadelphia

An illustrated US Civil War envelope, c1861–65. One Civil War widow was still receiving her military pension in 2003

The Neanderthal in the mirror

Rebecca Wragg Sykes argues that the ever evolving ways in which we have depicted Neanderthals in art over the past 150 years reveal just as much about us as them

KENNIS AND KENNIS



Snap happy
A smiling Neanderthal sculpted by palaeoartists Adrie and Alfons Kennis in 2012. While members of this human species were once widely portrayed as vacant or brutish, now they confidently hold our gaze

Nobody alive today remembers a time before we knew the Neanderthals. Yet their discovery happened very recently in the wider context of human history – barely five generations back. 1856 is the official Neanderthal "ground zero", when bones materialised in a cloud of clay clods and black powder from the Feldhofer cave, near Düsseldorf in Germany.

This was the first *recognised* find. Nearly three decades earlier, a Neanderthal skull-top had been discovered in a Belgian cave, but its unusual anatomy was less obvious because it was a child. In 1848 yet another skull emerged, this time from near the Forbes military battery on Gibraltar. This nearly became the "type" fossil for the species. But its true significance only became clear just after the Feldhofer find had been given a scientific moniker: *Homo neanderthalensis*, after the Neander "thal" (valley), where it was discovered.

But the Forbes skull (❶), which belonged to a Neanderthal woman who lived around 90,000 years ago, does have a first to its name, as the subject of the earliest reconstruction of a hominin fossil. On 19 July 1864, just a few days after the skull had arrived in England by ship, biologist Thomas Huxley sketched "Homo Hercules columarum" (❷), or Pillars of Hercules man, a reference to the classical name for the Rock of Gibraltar. Based on the skull, Huxley envisioned ape-like features including a hairy pelt (skin) and a short tail. Strikingly, there are long feet with opposable toes (also an ape-like feature).

"Homo Hercules columarum" will go down in history as the world's first reconstruction of a Neanderthal. It was, of course, far from the last. From the 1860s onwards, imaginations bloomed and artistic interpretations started multiplying. In the century and a half since Huxley drew the Forbes woman, anatomists, authors and artists have produced hugely diverse depictions of this human species – everything from threatening brutes rendered on canvas to hyper-realistic digital portraits. This diversity is a reflection of both the evolution of artistic tastes and our growing knowledge of how the Neanderthals lived, inspired by archaeological discoveries. But, crucially, it is also a manifestation of the way in which they force us, as fellow humans, to reconsider ourselves.

Like the discovery of radio waves and new galaxies, Neanderthals had a dramatic impact on our culture

In search of culture

For all its status as a "first", "Homo Hercules columarum" wasn't entirely original. In fact, it bore a resemblance to an illustration published in 1838 by Pierre Boitard in *Magasin Universel*: "L'homme fossile" (❸). Despite being portrayed as a kind of "missing link" to other apes, "L'homme fossile" sports a carnivore's pelt and carries a wooden-handled stone axe.

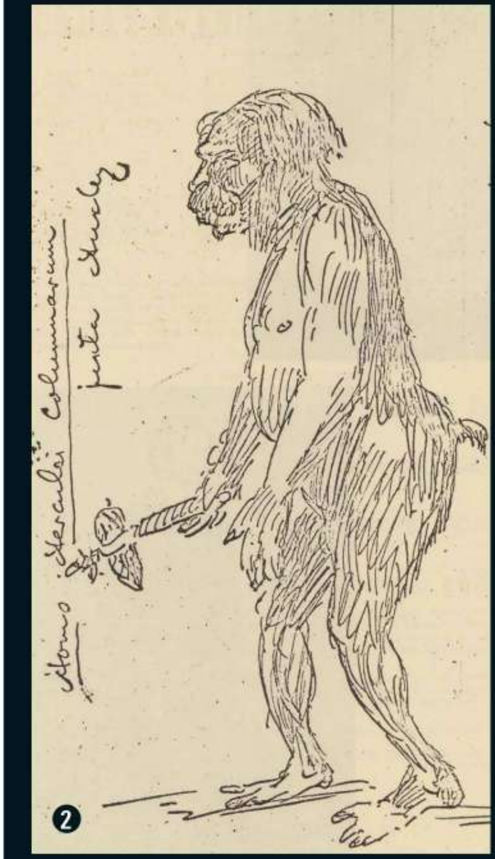
Perhaps the most "civilised" of the early visions of the Neanderthals was that by Ernest Griset in *Harper's Weekly*, 1873 (❹). The presence of (minimal) clothing in the form of a worked animal skin and a hafted stone axe are reminiscent of "L'homme fossile", but significantly the body is upright, and there's no hint of hairy skin. Aside from a woman lying despondently in the cave's rear, there are two apparently domesticated dogs next to a finely crafted stone-tipped spear.

Griset's illustration was somewhat speculative – it wasn't until the 1880s that Neanderthal bones were actually excavated in association with stone artefacts. From that point onwards, it was certain that, as Griset seems to have surmised, Neanderthals *did* have culture.

The impact of the discovery of Neanderthals beyond the scientific sphere in the second half of the 19th century and onwards should not be underestimated. Along with other reality-shaking discoveries – radio waves, electro-magnetism, the existence of galaxies beyond our own – it had a dramatic impact on culture. Not only was the age of the Earth vastly greater than once conceived, but the feet of other types of human had once walked the land. This all fed into the mélange of excitement and existential anxiety that underlay the nascent genre of science fiction and fantasy literature.

Within two decades of the Feldhofer finding, novels featuring prehistoric humans began appearing, meeting the appetite of a society struggling to situate itself in cosmological terms. And interestingly, cross-overs can be seen in other ways: some of the same artists illustrating popular science books featuring Neanderthals were also producing art for Jules Verne's novels *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* (1864) and *From the Earth to the Moon* (1865).

By the first decades of the 20th century, artistic interpretations of Neanderthals were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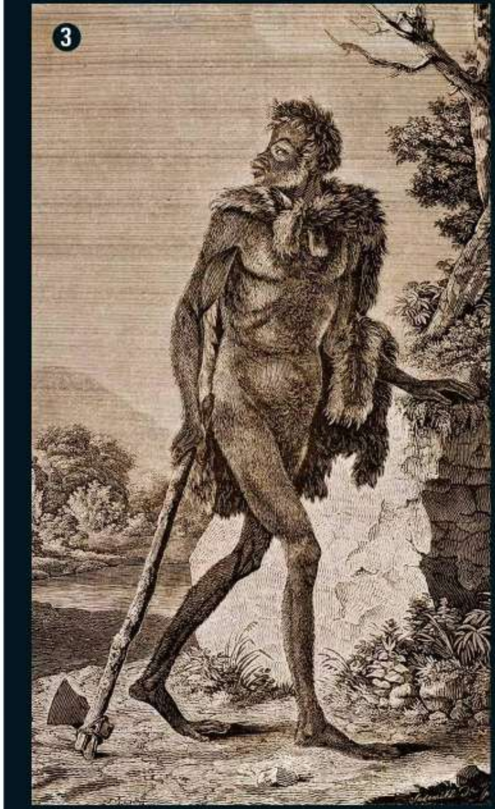
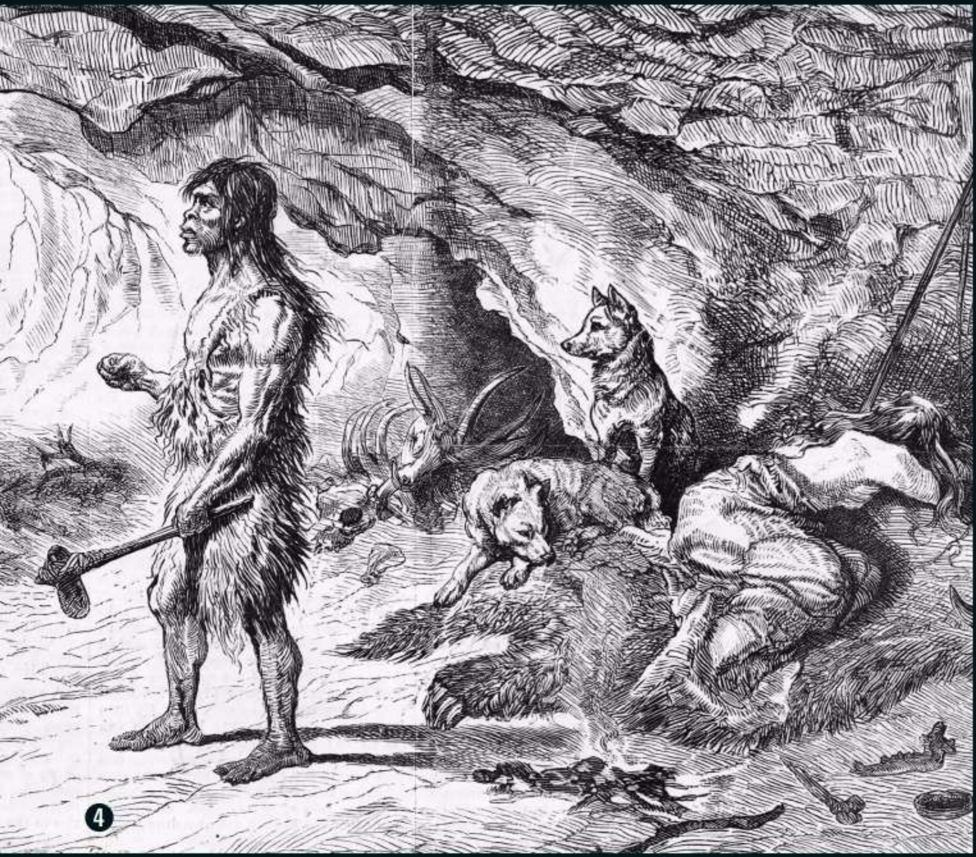

❸

❷ Thomas Huxley's "Homo Hercules columarum" (1864) was the first piece of art inspired by a Neanderthal fossil. Huxley's sketch was strikingly similar to Pierre Boitard's speculative "L'Homme Fossile" ❸ from 1838

HUXLEY PAPERS 31.158 ARCHIVES IMPERIAL COLLEGE LONDON/NATURE PL/SCIENCE AND PHOTO LIBRARY/ALAMY



④ Ernest Griset's Neanderthal (1873) is more "civilised" than its predecessors, with a crafted stone-tipped spear among its possessions

Head-turner
A reproduction of a skull of a female Neanderthal, discovered in Gibraltar in 1848. From the moment such remains began emerging from the earth, artists were mesmerised

WHO WERE THE NEANDERTHALS?

The latest discoveries are painting a picture of skilled hunters and innovators with an eye for natural beauty

Advances in archaeological excavation and analysis over the past three decades have blown apart long-held misconceptions about Neanderthals. This distinct species of human emerged around 400,000–350,000 years ago and existed until 40,000 years ago. During that time span, they coped not only with cold, but also dramatically shifting climates. They were just as much people of the forest as the tundra, surviving conditions warmer than we experience today.

This ecological variety, combined with a vast geographic range, meant a diverse diet. Neanderthals were top hunters, whether of megafauna like mammoth or small game like rabbits or even tortoises.

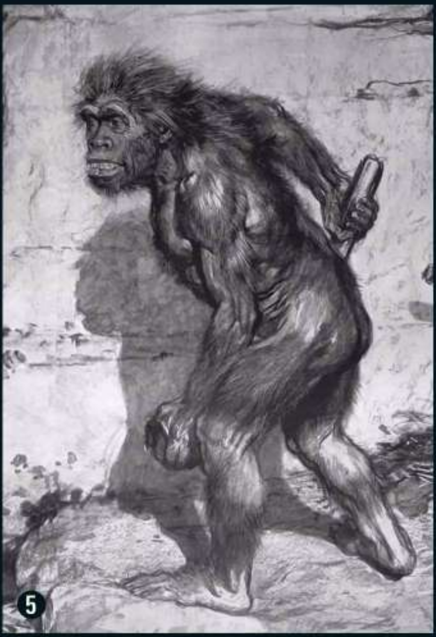
Neanderthals were a little shorter than us on average, with powerful, well muscled bodies, wider ribs, and differently shaped pelvic bones. But they walked fully upright. The front of their chinless face was pulled forward with bigger noses and eyes.

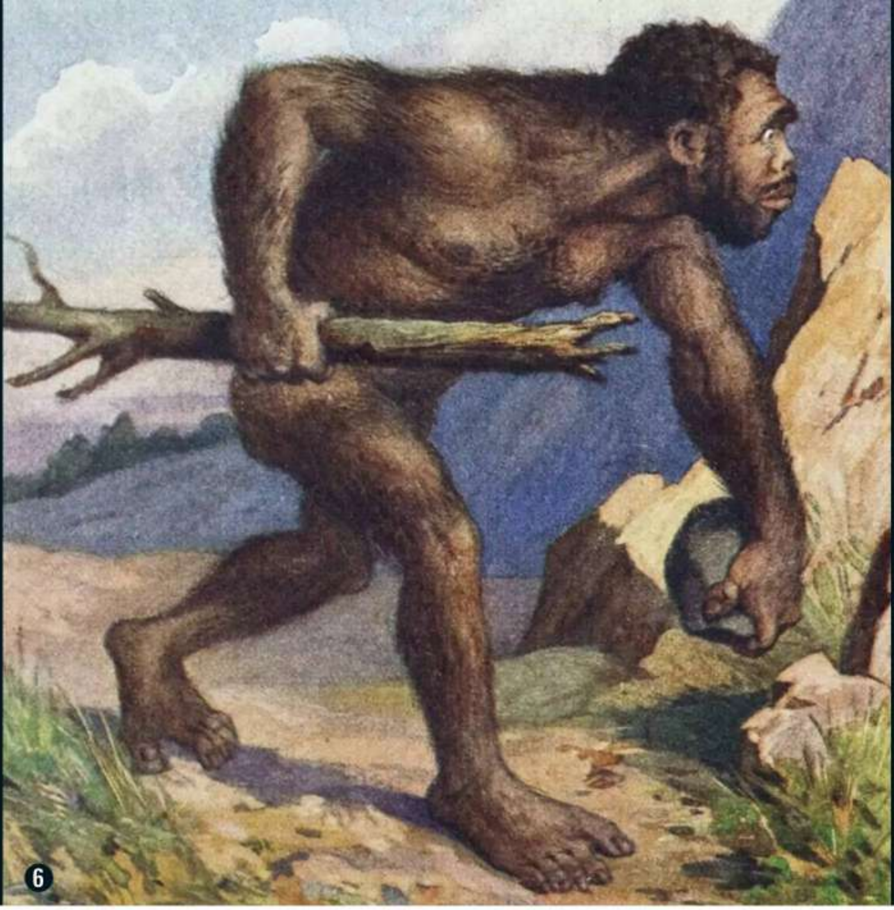
Culturally, Neanderthals were never stuck-in-the-mud dullards. Their many stone tool technologies reveal innovation, whether at the scale of an individual flint core or in visible variations between regions and through time. They were also artisans in wood, bone and even shell. Polish and wear on their tools and teeth prove they worked animal hides, and they also produced the first synthetic material, birch tar, as an adhesive.

Modern studies support early claims for some burials. But bodies could also be carefully taken apart, sometimes eaten, with bone shards used as tools or even marked in unusual ways.

This apparent aesthetic interest in altering surfaces is echoed by incised lines on animal bones, as well as the application of pigments to objects such as fossil shells and eagle talons. Neanderthal life was never easy, but we see in them an emerging human existence that transcended bare survival.

Perhaps the greatest revolution in our understanding of Neanderthals is that they did not entirely vanish. The theory that *Homo sapiens* (modern humans) simply replaced Neanderthals 40,000 years ago was overturned in 2010 by DNA showing interbreeding.





⑤ Franz Kupka's "Old Man" (1909) portrays a stooped, Gorilla-like creature. ⑥ By the time Ludwig Wilser described Neanderthals as having brown skin and tightly curled hair (shown in this 1910 image), many depictions were reflecting racist stereotypes

splitting into different visions. Marcel Boule, an eminent anatomist, studied one of the first "in-situ" Neanderthal skeletons, from La Chapelle-aux-Saints, France. His 1911 publication not only provided the first full anatomical guide to their skeletons, but also included the Edwardian version of 3D graphics: stereo photographs allowed readers to transcend the flat pages and meet the gaze of those vast, empty eye-sockets.

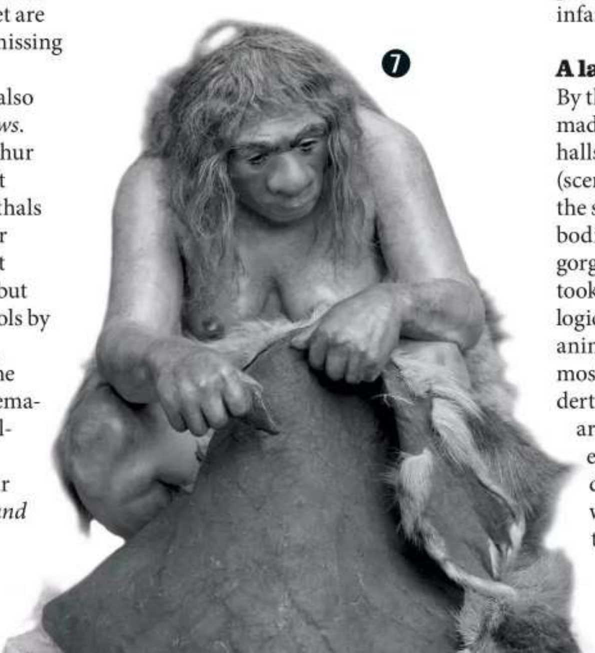
The artist Franz Kupka produced an immensely influential reconstruction of this Neanderthal, known as the "Old Man" (⑤), in 1909. It envisioned a gorilla-like, stooped creature with bared teeth and a hefted branch or bone. Though Kupka apparently collaborated with Boule, his Neanderthal's feet are overly ape-like; this is more akin to a missing link than a near relation.

Just two years later, the "Old Man" also appeared in the *Illustrated London News*. Commissioned by another expert, Arthur Keith, this image showcased a different perspective. Keith's vision of Neanderthals was not as dead-end failures, but as our ancestors, and the result was an almost domestic Neanderthal with a sizeable but tidy beard, sitting carefully making tools by a blazing fire, complete with jewellery.

Around the same time, reflecting the contemporary influence of white supremacy, including eugenics, distinctly racialised images of Neanderthals began to emerge. This is most explicit in a colour illustration (⑥) from the book *Leben und Heimat des Urmenschen*, written by Ludwig Wilser, a German populariser of race science and ardent Aryanist. Published the year after Kupka's reconstruction, this Neanderthal is similarly bent over, but also has a primitive divergent toe. Beneath its fur, the skin colour is brown, while head hair and beard are both tightly curled. This is intended to be read as a black person. What's more, there are no cultural items – the Neanderthal is simply carrying a branch and boulder.

Another of the most bestial depictions of the Neanderthals appeared just two years later in a book by Henry Knipe. Here a small family group, once again hairy and dark-skinned, huddle against a cliff looking both petrified and aggressive. The female holds an infant and stick, the male a rock.

Frederick Blaschke's Neanderthals, exhibited from the late 1920s, are "mostly passive, even dejected"

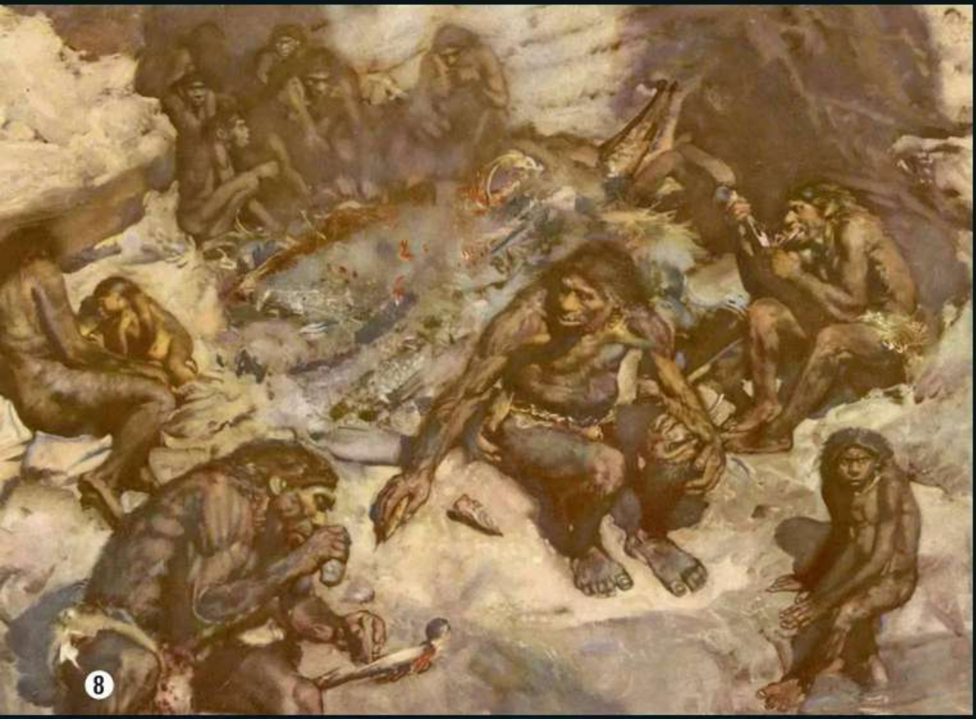


⑦

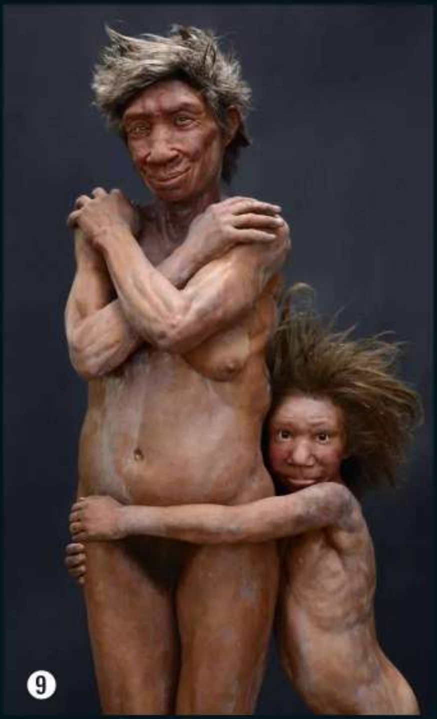
A lack of "spark"

By the end of the 1920s, Neanderthals had made the transition from books to exhibition halls, as the subject of a large-scale diorama (scene) in Chicago's Field Museum. Made by the sculptor Frederick Blaschke (⑦), the bodies of a number of Neanderthals are gorgeously realistic, even beautiful. Blaschke took some care, too, to represent the archaeological evidence, with one woman working animal hides using a stone tool. Yet what's most arresting about these embodied Neanderthals is their lack of "spark". The postures are mostly passive, even dejected; their expressions downcast or vacant. They do not resemble beings at home in the world, and look as if they're waiting for their own extinction.

NATURE PL/GETTY IMAGES



⑧ Zdeněk Burian's painting from 1952 offers a sympathetic portrayal of Neanderthals practising cannibalism. "It appears as a calm response to death, rather than murderous carnage," writes Rebecca Wragg Sykes



⑨ Self-assurance, even contentment, emanate from this 2016 Kennis sculpture of a woman and child

And it's this very theme that came to the fore after the Second World War when extermination of those classed as subhuman had been industrialised. William Golding's novel *The Inheritors* (1955) presents us as aggressors, spreading through the world. His gentle Neanderthal protagonist, Lok, describes the incomers as: "…like a famished wolf in the hollow of a tree… They are like the river and the fall… nothing stands against them."

Relatively peaceable Neanderthals also began appearing in mid-20th-century art. Czech artist Zdeněk Burian not only had them hunting small game, but also managed to make a cannibalism scene (⑧) appear as a calm response to death, rather than murderous carnage. In Burian's painting, the Neanderthals are still noticeably dark-skinned. It's possible this was being drawn from anthropology itself, since theories that it had taken non-white human races longer to become "sapiens" persisted through the 1960s and beyond.

It was actually one notable proponent of this idea, Carleton Coon, who was responsible for what became something of a "meme" in Neanderthal reconstructions: dressing them in modern clothing. His sketch, in a 1939 book, of a male sporting business attire and a hat, was echoed in 1957 by anatomists William Straus and AJE Cave who stated that if a Neanderthal was "reincarnated and placed in a New York subway – provided that he were bathed, shaved and dressed in modern clothing – it is doubtful whether he would attract any more attention than some of its other denizens". In the 1990s, a sculpture for the Neanderthal Museum, Germany was presented in a suit, complete with newspaper in his pocket.

Theories that it took non-white human races longer to become "sapiens" persisted into the 1960s

GETTY IMAGES/KENNIS AND KENNIS

As the 20th century wore on, however, archaeology itself began to mature, with better excavation and recording, and increased use of scientific methods for dating and analysis. This filtered out from academia, and began altering how the public perceived Neanderthals more widely.

Deep plant lore

By the 1980s Jean Auel's hugely popular *Earth's Children* novels were portraying Neanderthals not as inherently violent, but as compassionate and knowledgeable with a hybrid gestural-vocal language, and deep plant lore. The epic story begins when Iza, a Neanderthal woman, rescues Ayla, a young *Homo sapiens* girl who is near death. In doing so, she forces us to see ourselves through different eyes: "Peculiar looking little thing, she thought. Rather ugly in a way. Her face is so flat with that high bulging forehead, and little stub of a nose, and what a strange bony knob beneath her mouth... And so thin, I can feel her bones... Iza put her arm around the girl protectively."

Meanwhile, in the genre of "palaeoart", illustrators such as Mauricio Antón began homing in on the individuality of Neanderthals, as well as underlining the social worlds in which they lived.

Since 2000 the gap between us and Neanderthals has shrunk further. The latest research (see page 71) suggests that they were top hunters with diverse diets, technologically sophisticated and innovative, dealt with the dead in varying ways and appear to have had an aesthetic interest in materials like pigment. It's fascinating, then, that as they have come closer to us behaviourally, one of the most dramatic changes in reconstructions from the past 20 years is the direction of gaze. Rather than us observing Neanderthals, they now stare back at us. Even more, they increasingly appear confident, even happy. Dutch palaeoartists Adrie and Alfons Kennis were responsible for the first smiling sculpture, based on the original Feldhofer find. A later Kennis brothers work, from 2016, extends this emotional theme, representing the adult woman from Forbes Quarry, Gibraltar (⑨). Her eyes crinkle as she smiles contentedly (even proudly), embraced around the hips by a young boy. Partly

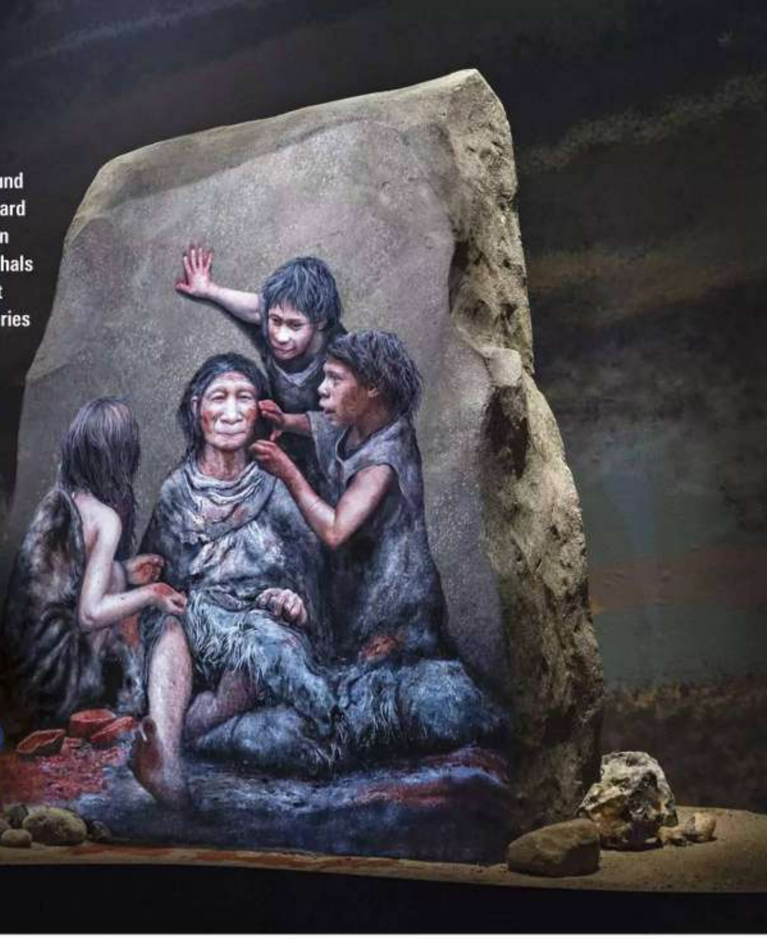
⑩

Kinga (sculpted by Elisabeth Daynès) with the women's interest magazine *Causette* at Paris's Musée de l'Homme

Causette
Kinga
LA FEMME DU MILLÉNAIRE

⑪

A scene by Tom Björklund for Denmark's Moesgaard Museum. Many modern depictions of Neanderthals aim to reflect the latest archaeological discoveries while striking an emotional chord



Kinga is basking in paparazzi flashes and the attention we've lavished on her kind for so long

hiding, his face communicates curiosity beneath nervousness.

What's most touching about this pair (named Nana and Flint) is that, while their earthly remains lay less than a kilometre apart, in reality they could never have met. She lived and died around 90,000 years ago, and he – only five years old when he died – some 40 millennia later.

Intriguingly, the Kennis brothers are also responsible for reconstructions that reveal something the world had never before seen: an attractive Neanderthal.

Beers and perfumes

Just as it once appeared inconceivable that an artist would construct a handsome Neanderthal (such as the one shown on page 69), so the idea that one would inhabit the world of celebrity culture seemed equally far fetched. Yet all that changed in 2018–19, when visitors to Paris's Musée de l'Homme were greeted by Kinga (⑩), created by the French sculptor Elisabeth Daynès. Kinga is a Neanderthal, but, sporting a playful expression, perfectly coiffured hair and an outfit designed by the renowned couturier "agnès b", she is also uncannily modern. In front of her is a wall of media headlines about Neanderthals, as well as 21st-century brands referencing Neanderthals, such as beers and perfumes. She is basking in paparazzi flashes, lapping up the attention we've lavished on her kind for so long. She even holds an edition of the women's magazine *Causette*, with herself on the cover as "Millennial Woman".

These themes of connectedness continue to shine out from the most recent literature and art representing Neanderthals. Claire Cameron's novel *The Last Neanderthal* (2017) includes luminous chapters imagining the life of "Girl" some 40,000 years ago, describing how she lives with what readers eventually realise is a foundling *Homo sapiens* boy. "Runt's limbs were oddly slim. His chest was as narrow as a leg.... He had chattered. Rather than call the boy a crowthroat, she tried to listen. She was amused by the sounds. Fast and scaly, the words slithered past his ears and into the wind."

In the sphere of digital media, the celebrated palaeoartist Tom Björklund has produced a series of realistic and profoundly affecting images, imbued with personality, even soul. His works are central features of a new exhibition scheduled to run later this year at the Moesgaard Museum, Denmark (⑪), which will feature portraits reminiscent of oil paintings together with scenes rooted in the latest archaeological discoveries.

It's in this context of artists increasingly merging complex archaeological evidence with nuanced cultural views that my book *Kindred* was published last year. As well as featuring historical representations, I included two of Björklund's portrait-type works, one of which is quite revolutionary. He depicts a male Neanderthal carrying a young child on his shoulders, both looking off to the side. Through the wider milieu of palaeoart, it's extraordinarily unusual to see males interacting with children, never mind affectionately touching them.

Artistic representations of Neanderthals have been on an extraordinary journey over the past century and a half. Whatever the future has in store for us with new discoveries, we can be sure our drive to know Neanderthals will find new artistic expression. They exist as dry bones in glass cabinets, in digital 3D reconstructions, and in the very bodies of billions of people, but are also created anew in our imaginations. H

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Rebecca Wragg Sykes' bestselling book, *Kindred: Neanderthal Life, Love, Death and Art*, was published by Bloomsbury Sigma in 2020. She discussed the Neanderthals on a recent episode of the HistoryExtra podcast: *historyextra.com/neanderthals-podcast*

FRANCK BESSIÈRE - HANS LUCAS/PRESS PHOTOS BY MOESGAARD MUSEUM-NEANDERTHAL EXHIBITION 2020-21 – IMAGES BY TOM BJØRKLUND

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BOOKS

FICTION

"Uganda was the only home they had known. Now they were forced to leave everything behind"

Neema Shah discusses her new novel, *Kololo Hill* › page 87

GLOBAL

"The history of constitutions is far too important to be left to constitutional lawyers"

David Armitage on Linda Colley's *The Gun, the Ship, and the Pen* › page 82

CINEMA

"Male dominance in the film industry was not inevitable. Women were central to early cinema"

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"Ireland has long been a country of emigrants, and some extraordinary careers have resulted"

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"How can something as filthy as handshaking be so prominent in human history?"

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ALEXANDER JAMES

"It's no coincidence that the police seized on the odd-looking boy from the only Indian family in the village"

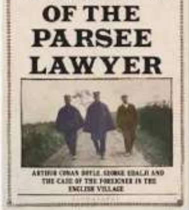
SHRABANI BASU speaks to Ellie Cawthorne about her new book, *The Mystery of the Parsee Lawyer*, which recounts a miscarriage of justice investigated by the creator of Sherlock Holmes

Ellie Cawthorne: *The Mystery of the Parsee Lawyer* tells the story of a bizarre crime which led to a major miscarriage of justice in Edwardian England. Can you introduce us to the case?

Shrabani Basu: In 1903, a small mining village in the Midlands called Great Wyrley was suddenly subjected to terror. Horses and cattle were being mutilated in a gruesome crime that horrified the villagers – someone was slashing the stomachs of animals and leaving them in the field to die. This happened with increasing frequency for six months. The police didn't have a clue *why*, or who was responsible.

At the same time, strange anonymous letters were circulating, pointing towards one family, the Edaljis – the only Indian family that lived in the village. Suspicion for both the horse maimings and the sinister letters began to turn on the eldest son, George – the "Parsee Lawyer" of my title. At the time, George was a 27-year-old solicitor working in Birmingham. He was awkward and shy, didn't have too many friends and was known for having strange, bulging eyes.

The police needed someone to blame for the horse maimings, and so they zeroed in on George – an outsider who didn't quite fit in. George claimed he had absolutely nothing to do with it and that he'd never touched a horse in his life. But he was arrested and put on trial. Within 55 minutes the jury decided he was guilty, and he was imprisoned. After three years of incarceration George was released on parole, but when he came out, he had nowhere to go, no job and a terrible crime staining his record.


SHRABANI BASU
THE MYSTERY OF THE PARSEE LAWYER
ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, GEORGE EDALJI AND THE CASE OF THE FOREIGNER IN THE ENGLISH VILLAGE

The Mystery of the Parsee Lawyer: Arthur Conan Doyle, George Edalji and the Case of the Foreigner in the English Village
by Shrabani Basu
(Bloomsbury,
320 pages, £20)

But in prison, George had been reading the detective stories of Arthur Conan Doyle. Somehow he got it into his head that this was the man to clear his name. So he wrote to the famous author asking for help. And that's how, in an unexpected twist of fate, Arthur Conan Doyle became involved in this story, because he decided to go to the Midlands and investigate the case for himself.

How did the Edaljis end up in Great Wyrley to begin with? The journey of George's father to get there was quite remarkable.

Yes, George's father – Shapurji – was the local vicar, and he was in fact Britain's first south Asian vicar. Born in Mumbai, or Bombay as it was known then, he was a Parsee from a very traditional family. But when Shapurji went to a Christian college, he became increasingly influenced by Christianity and keen to read Christian texts. Parsees like him were often targeted by missionaries for conversion because they were seen as a business class who were very westernised. Shapurji ended up running away because his family objected to his move towards Christianity, and he turned up on the doorstep of the local church in Bombay, run by Reverend Wilson. Eventually, he was baptised. That was a bold move as it meant that his family wanted nothing more to do with him. After his conversion he came to England to train as a curate, where he met Charlotte, whose father was also a vicar. The pair fell in love and got married.

In 1876 – the same year their first son, George, was born – Shapurji gained a post in the parish of Great Wyrley, a mining village in rural South Staffordshire. It was fairly bleak, with a lot of poverty and illiteracy. Shapurji carried out many funerals, often burying babies who didn't survive. Later, when Arthur Conan Doyle was describing the village, he said that the arrival of an Indian clergyman and his family was never going to go down well there.

What can you tell us about attitudes to Indians and India in Britain at the time?

When the Edaljis arrived in the Midlands in 1876, they were doing so at the height of empire. Victoria was on the throne. The Indian Mutiny of 1857 was a recent memory. Indians were seen as the classes that the British ruled over. At the same time, there was a big concern about mixed marriages, especially white English women like Charlotte marrying Indian men like Shapurji. Although Charlotte's own family were very happy with the match, mixed race couples were generally frowned upon by most people. It was felt that they were diluting the purity of the English race, and they were often targeted for attacks.

Several years before the horse mutilations began, the Edaljis were targeted by a campaign of hate mail and hoaxes. What did these letters contain and what impact did they have?

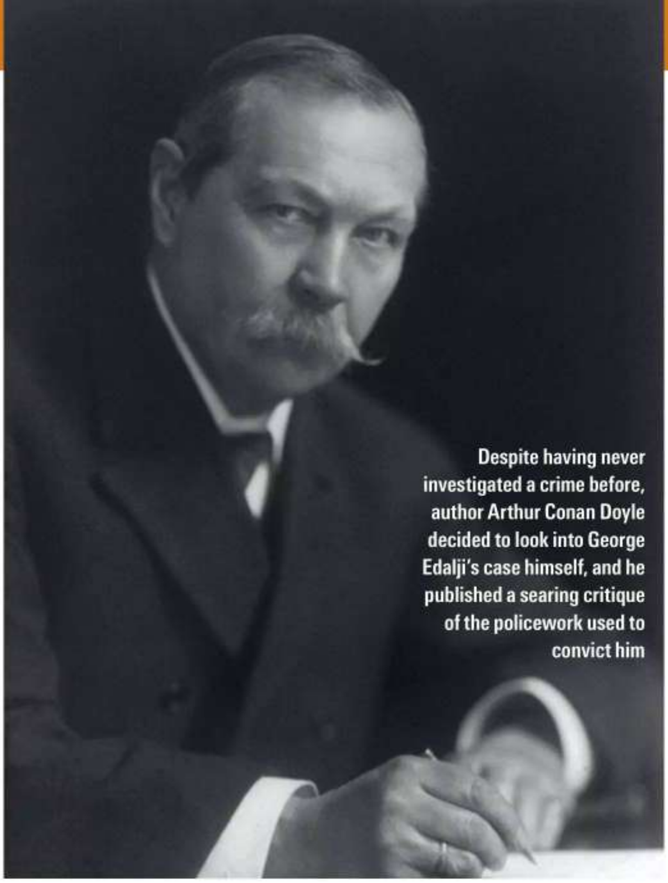
I've been able to study some of them up close, and they are chilling to read. The letters started slowly but became more and more aggressive. Some of them displayed a crazed sort of religious mania, and many of them showed a knowledge of local people and the area. They seemed to pick on George, who was just a 12-year-old schoolboy at the time, with direct threats on him, crude sketches and all the abusive words you can imagine.

Alongside the letters, excrement was thrown in through the vicarage window, and graffiti was daubed on the house saying "The Edaljis are wicked." It's the typical race hate scene that you might visualise. In one bizarre incident, a key belonging to a grammar school was deposited outside the Edaljis house. Immediately the police seized on the key as a piece of evidence and suspected it was an

PROFILE

Shrabani Basu is an author and journalist. Her books include *Spy Princess: The Life of Noor Inayat Khan* (2008), *For King and Another Country: Indian Soldiers on the Western Front, 1914–18* (2016), and *Victoria & Abdul: The Extraordinary True Story of the Queen's Closest Confidant* (2010), adapted into a 2017 film starring Judi Dench

PHOTOGRAPH BY
FRAN MONKS



Despite having never investigated a crime before, author Arthur Conan Doyle decided to look into George Edalji's case himself, and he published a searing critique of the policework used to convict him

inside job by George. They said he was the one who had stolen the key and sent the letters. But from the beginning it made no sense. It was from a school that George did not even attend. Why would you go to a school six miles away, pick up a random key and deposit it outside your own door? It defied logic.

This all happened when George was just a schoolboy, but it laid important groundwork because it meant that, even as a teenager, he was already on the police's radar. And so when several years later the anonymous letters started again, this time accompanied by brutal horse killings, they said: "It's him. He's done it again."

What can this case tell us about the way that the police and justice systems worked at the time?

This was all unfolding in the Midlands, so I couldn't do a sweeping generalisation of all of England, but there was clearly a lot of prejudice. "Unconscious bias" and "prejudice" are buzzwords now, but this is exactly what was happening back then. It's no coincidence that the police immediately seized on the odd-looking boy from the only non-white family in the village.

The head of the Staffordshire Police Force at the time was a man named Captain Anson, and I think it's quite important to understand his background. He was an aristocrat rooted in the imperial system, whose family had served during the Indian Mutiny and held positions in major colonial centres. His house was full of treasures from the colonies. All of this informed his mentality and attitude. Anson said that it was absurd that a "Hindoo" vicar like Shapurji (who of course was not actually a Hindu) who could "barely speak English" had become the vicar of a white community. He couldn't reconcile the fact that a person of colour could be preaching the word of God to a whole parish of white, English people. As well as his dismissal of the vicar, Anson had nothing but contempt for the white woman who married him, and their children.

And so without any proof, he became convinced that George was writing the letters and later that it was him mutilating horses. When it came to the trial, Anson was the one directing things from behind the scenes. But he made up his mind before George had even stepped into the dock and was completely inflexible in his opinions. Even later, when a Home Office committee looked into the case again, he refused to budge. He held his position against George Edalji until the end.

What evidence did the police present for George's guilt?

It was almost laughable. They went to his house and picked up a pair of muddy boots, which they said were proof that George had been sneaking around in the fields at night. But it had been raining, so of course his boots would be muddy. They also picked up a coat which they claimed had horsehairs on it. But the Edalji family saw it before it was taken away and said there *weren't* any horsehairs on it. They also had a handwriting expert who said that the writing in the anonymous letters was a match for George's. But this expert had been involved in a previous case that had resulted in the conviction of an innocent man, so his testimony was questionable. It was very flimsy evidence. What was also bizarre is that George's case – which had become a sensation in the national media – was tried in a lower court where only minor cases were usually tried.

> **" It was one of those dark mysteries of the countryside. Conan Doyle saw a wrong that needed to be righted, and supporting the underdog gave him a new lease of life "**

As all of this was unfolding in the Midlands, what was going on in Arthur Conan Doyle's life?

By this point he had got thoroughly fed up with his most beloved creation, Sherlock Holmes. He was frustrated that people kept conflating the author with his character – one of the things that made him snap was a delivery of shirts addressed "to Sherlock Holmes". He felt he had lived in Holmes' shadow for too long, and so he threw him down the Reichenbach Falls in order to get rid of him.

But of course, it didn't last long. He had to bring Holmes back because people refused to let the character go. So in 1902 he returned to Holmes with what would prove his most famous book, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. It was an overnight success, and so just as everything was going wrong for George Edalji, everything was beginning to start again for Arthur Conan Doyle.

When George contacted Conan Doyle after his release from prison in 1906, it was a time of tragedy in the author's life. His wife, Louise, whom he called "Touie", died after several years of battling tuberculosis. It was complicated, because as well as grief, he was also rocked by guilt, due to the fact he had fallen in love with a vibrant younger woman called Jean Leckie. It was at this difficult juncture in his life that George suddenly appeared from nowhere. This real-life mystery fell into Conan Doyle's lap, and he jumped into it with all his energy.

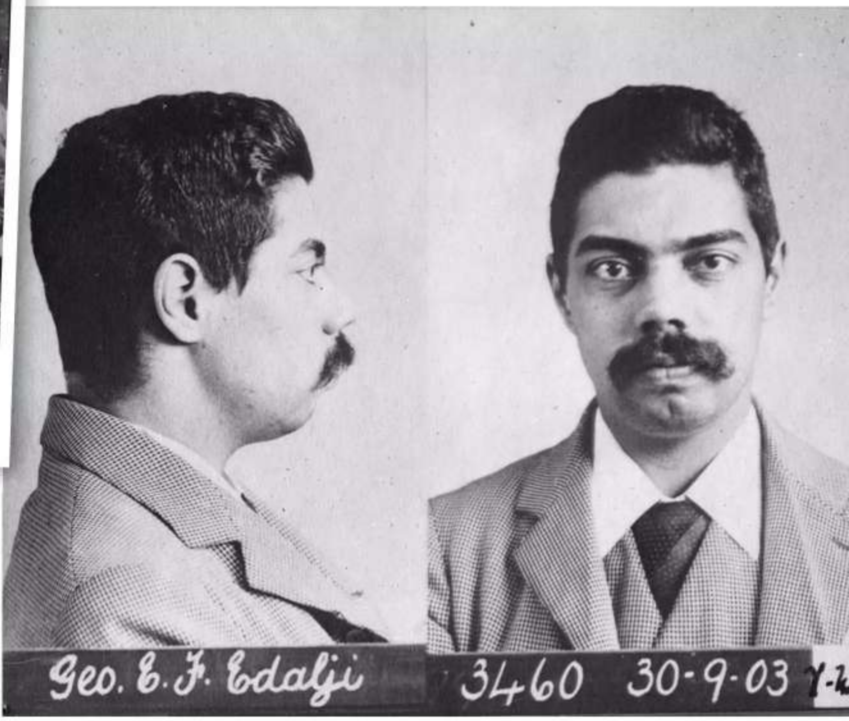
How did Conan Doyle galvanise calls for a reassessment of George's case?

Hats off to Conan Doyle. After hearing George's request for his help, he went to Great Wyrley and conducted a full investigation, interviewing people and setting up a network of local informers.

One of the most important points raised by Conan Doyle, which had not been brought up at the trial at all, was the fact that George was severely myopic. That is why he had these bulging eyes, which made him look unusual. He could only read something if it was incredibly close to his face and off to the side. Conan Doyle argued that there was no way that a person with such terrible vision would have been able to

GETTY IMAGES

LEFT: Shapurji Edalji pictured in 1903. Britain's first south Asian vicar found his family targeted by a campaign of hate mail in his Midlands parish
ABOVE: The Edaljis, seen here in 1892. George's parents and sister Maud campaigned tirelessly to clear his name



The 1903 mugshot of George Edalji , following his arrest after being accused of mutilating horses. The evidence presented against George "was almost laughable", says Shrabani Basu

cross these fields in the dark rainy night to slash these animals. And anyway, what was the weapon? Nothing was found, except some tiny razors which Conan Doyle argued couldn't possibly have done the job. He also offered an explanation for the horsehairs on George's jacket. The police had a piece of hide from the dead horse, and when the evidence was transported and stored, these things weren't kept in separate sealed bags. So somewhere in transit, as this cold and wet suit was taken in for inspection, it seems that some horsehair transferred from the horse skin onto the jacket.

Conan Doyle wrote all of this up in a series of incredibly detailed articles in *The Daily Telegraph*, refuting every point of evidence. The article compared George's trial to the Dreyfus affair in France and argued that George had only been accused because he was a Parsee. It was published all over the country and suddenly George was a sensation. With an influential figure like Conan Doyle backing him, there was a swing in how people – and especially the media – viewed him and his case. During the trial, newspaper reports had described George in negative, racialised terms, commenting on his "debased jaw" and "dark, Oriental face". But now they portrayed him as a victim, wrongly accused. It just shows what a little bit of a celebrity backing can do.

Why do you think Conan Doyle was so motivated to throw himself into the case in the way that he did?

It was one of those dark mysteries in the countryside. That's a big theme in crime fiction, so I can see why it would appeal to a writer like Conan Doyle. As Sherlock Holmes himself once said, cruel things could happen in the countryside. Beneath the calm and idyllic exterior, dark things were stirring.

He definitely saw it as a wrong that needed to be righted. I think that supporting the underdog gave him a new lease of life. Let's not forget that, although he was critiquing those in power, Arthur Conan Doyle was very much a figure of the British establishment himself. He had even been knighted. But he had a strong sense of what "English justice" should look like. He felt that any miscarriage of justice had to be dealt with and that having a fair justice system was part of Britain's imperial greatness.

And although he'd written plenty of mysteries, he didn't have any experience investigating real crimes, did he? How did the police respond to him trying his hand at detective work?

Yes, he had absolutely no real-world experience. Some of the new materials I drew on were Captain Anson's service files and the letters between him and Conan Doyle. These letters, which only came up for auction in 2015, were an amazing resource because they showed the extent of the clash between Anson and Conan Doyle, and how personal it became. Conan Doyle tried to help Anson with leads, because he was really keen that George's case was actually dealt with. But Anson was stubborn and refused to be taught policing by a mere writer of fiction. It became a matter of ego for him. So very quickly a kind of cat and mouse game developed between Conan Doyle and Anson's police force. The police even laid traps for him.

What was the legacy of the case?

Before the miscarriage of justice George suffered, there was no formal system for appeal if you were sentenced. The verdict was final – that was it. Which is why George's supporters had to appeal to the Home Office [an inquiry eventually pardoned George but maintained that he had written some of letters and was therefore not eligible for compensation]. But shortly after this all came to light, in 1907, the foundations of the Criminal Appeal Court were laid out.

You could also see this as part of a bigger story about race and injustice in Britain. What struck me when researching this was that this feels like it could still happen today, but just in different forms. Black and Asian people are still targeted disproportionately by stop and search. Where there were anonymous letters, now we have internet trolls. But there are those who do fight back. So it was inspiring to see that back then, even before Conan Doyle came on the scene, there were all those who supported George and fought for equality and decency. **H**

MORE FROM US

Listen to an extended version of this interview with Shrabani Basu on our podcast soon at **historyextra.com/podcast**

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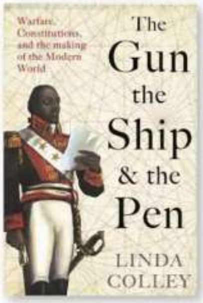
A sign of the times
A frieze in Washington DC's Capitol building depicts the signing of the US Constitution. Linda Colley's new book offers fresh perspectives on the role of constitutions in global history

GLOBAL

Documenting history

DAVID ARMITAGE hails an "enthralling, illuminating and inspiring" work of scholarship, which explains how the advent and spread of written constitutions shaped the modern world



The Gun, the Ship, and the Pen
by Linda Colley
Profile, 512 pages, £25

If you're building a navy from scratch, much can hang symbolically on what you call your ships. When George Washington received a list of names for new frigates in 1795, the *United States* came top, followed by the *Constitution*. (The *President* was third.) The first was predictable; the second, perhaps less so. The eponymous American document had been ratified only seven years before and was among only a tiny handful of similar instruments anywhere in force. As Linda Colley reminds us in her dazzling new book, constitutions were still rare and fragile in the late 18th century and would take another hundred years to blanket the world. She argues that what propelled the spread was war, not least naval war. In light of her findings, the USS *Constitution*'s moniker seems easier to explain, and even a bit overdetermined.

That striking link between warfare and lawfare in the history of constitutions is only the grandest of many fresh arguments in *The Gun, the Ship, and the Pen*. Colley conducts a vivid worldwide tour of "a contagious political genre" from roughly the Seven Years' War to the First World War, with glances both backwards (to Interregnum England) and forwards (to present-day South Africa and Russia). Her aim is to liberate constitutions from the national – indeed, often nationalist – silos to which they have usually been consigned. She asks not just what the documents said but what their composition and circulation, their imitation and veneration, can tell us about such matters as forming states, popular politics and the meanings of modernity. The result is one of the most enthralling, illuminating and inspiring works of global history in decades.

Again and again, Colley's connective, transnational approach reveals striking patterns and raises novel problems. Why were so many early constitutional entrepreneurs Protestants, and often Freemasons?

ALAMY

How did islands, from Corsica to Pitcairn, become the forcing houses of constitutions? Why were most constitution-mongers men, with the conspicuous exception of the Russian empress Catherine the Great? And how do we explain Britain's trade surplus in constitutions, energetically peddling them to others but never writing one for itself?

Traditional constitutional history avoided similar questions because it was more textual than contextual, focused on the meaning of provisions rather than constitutions' larger significance. In much of the world, study of constitutions long ago migrated from history departments to law schools but, with its rich circumstantial detail and panoramic scope, *The Gun, the Ship, and the Pen* proves that the history of constitutions is too important to be left to constitutional lawyers. And it's important, not least, because from modest beginnings constitutions came to matter to millions across the globe: "Every country has a constitution", the Chinese reformer Kang Youwei recalled rebellious Turkish soldiers telling their sultan in the 1870s.

Colley's first major example is the Corsican general Pasquale Paoli's constitution for his home island in 1755. Although this was short-lived, it pointed forward in salient ways: to constitutions as specifically written, more often printed, documents; to constitutional freelancing by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and his ilk; and to grand experiments in remaking the world through law like those of another charismatic Corsican, born Napoleone di Buonaparte. It was no accident that Paoli and Napoleon were both men at arms. As Colley shows, when "hybrid warfare" on land and sea increasingly extended over oceans and continents, constitutions became a handy political technology for managing taxation, representation and mobilisation. Indeed, in the century after 1776, military matters appeared in almost 3,400 constitutional provisions. To paraphrase the historical sociologist Charles Tilly, states made war – and war made constitutions.

Wars generated reams of paperwork. That flood also carried constitutions into print and to ever greater prominence. Often dismissed by critics as merely "paper constitutions", they had to be printed to be durable and, once published, were eminently portable. Radicals in Calcutta read the liberal Spanish Cádiz Constitution of 1812 as keenly as Kang Youwei later followed Turkey's constitutional experiments. Collections and copies of constitutions travelled transcontinentally by sail and later steam in the decades between the Haitian Revolution and Japan's Meiji Restoration. "Of making constitutions there is no end," historian Hosea Ballou Morse intoned biblically in 1919, echoing observers like Edmund Burke, John Adams and the Macau merchant who marvelled in 1831 at the prodigious output of "constitution manufactories" from Spain to contemporary Saxony.

This is a big book in every sense: vast in scope, broad in ambition and rich in stories, convergences and insights. And yet, as Dr Johnson might have said, one wishes it even longer than it is. Colley covers Europe, the Americas, the Pacific (in a particularly original chapter), Africa and east Asia but she could have told us more about the many continental or global constitutions proposed over the centuries, about the various failed or abortive constitutions, especially within the United States, and even about the world's longest constitution, for its largest democracy, the Indian Constitution of 1950. These may be counsels of perfection, but they indicate how fertile her account of "the relentless progress across geographical space of single-document written constitutions" will be for future scholars and perhaps also for constitution-makers.

"This is a big book in every sense: vast in scope, broad in ambition, and rich in stories, convergences and insights"

Thomas Jefferson observed that every constitution should expire after 19 years. This turned out to be nearly spot-on: quantitative study of constitutions since 1789 finds they last an average of about 17 years. (Recall the joke about the reader asking a librarian for a copy of the French constitution: "Try the periodicals section.") Against all expectations, some constitutions, notably Norway's of 1814, have lasted a good deal longer. The hoariest, of course, is the US constitution itself. After the battering it's taken in the past four years, we could be forgiven for seeing a parallel with the sailing-ship that bears its name. The USS *Constitution* remains moored to this day in Boston harbour, a majestic relic of political and military pressures in the 18th century, though one ill-equipped to face the challenges of the 21st. **H**

David Armitage is the Lloyd C Blankfein professor of history at Harvard University and author of *Civil Wars: A History in Ideas* (Yale)

JENNIFER BURNS

AUTHORS ON THE PODCAST

Aidan Dodson on Egypt's sun queen, Nefertiti

"Until fairly recently, Nefertiti has been regarded pretty much as a cypher. The beautiful bust of her found in 1912 has meant that she's been seen as a kind of international glamour puss rather than an actual person with thoughts and influence. It hasn't been until the last few years that we've started to realise there was rather more to Nefertiti and show that her career went beyond being simply a king's wife."

Anna Malaika Tubbs on the mothers of civil rights leaders

"Even before they had their sons, before they met their husbands, Alberta King, Louise Little and Berdis Baldwin [the mothers of Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and James Baldwin respectively] were incredibly talented, educated, passionate young women. They were already dedicating themselves to the black freedom movement, which they saw as a movement happening not only in the United States, but across the world."

Andrea Pitzer on a story of Arctic survival

"I came across the story of Dutch explorer William Barents when I was researching some islands called Nova Zembla, north of Siberia, for my first book. I found a brief mention of an expedition who had overwintered there – I couldn't believe I hadn't heard this story. This was pre-satellite phones, pre-GPS. They were off every map in existence. I decided then that I had to write a book about it."

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GLOBAL

Touching stories

Ella Al-Shamahi
The Handshake
A Gripping History

The Handshake: A Gripping History
by Ella Al-Shamahi
Profile Books, 128 pages, £10.99

Who can forget Joe Biden and Kamala Harris celebrating their victory in the 2020 US presidential race with a double fist bump? Has Covid finally killed off the handshake? Ella Al-Shamahi, paleoanthropologist and stand-up comic, is confident that the evolutionary and symbolic importance of the handshake means it will see a comeback. Her book is a chatty but erudite romp through history, focusing on the biological function of handshakes as well as their cultural meanings. She has a comedian's ability to cut through scientific pontification while retaining a scientist's commitment to precision.

Al-Shamahi sets out the main theories about handshaking (it turns out that it is not about demonstrating that you don't possess a weapon). She also provides nerdy instructions on the "correct" way to shake. This is not a book for the fainthearted, though. She informs readers that only one-fifth of people wash their hands after faecal contact. How can something so *filthy* be so prominent in human history?

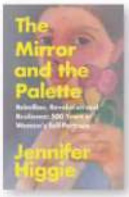
Her chief point is that touch is too central in human and non-human animal cultures to be eradicated altogether. Its history goes back tens of thousands of years. Shaking hands sends out chemical signals that facilitate communication. It releases oxytocin and dopamine, which are central to social bonding. Since human fingers, palms, and lips contain more receptors than any other part of our bodies, the effects of touch are biochemical, physiological and emotional. So, if it is premature to mourn the death of handshaking due to the pandemic, it is all-too-human to crave more touch.

Joanna Bourke, editor of *War and Art: A Visual History of Modern Conflict* (Reaktion, 2017) and professor of history at Birkbeck

» **Turn to page 98 to read about Ella Al-Shamahi's History Hero**

ART HISTORY

On reflection



The Mirror and the Palette
by Jennifer Higgie
Orion, 336 pages, £20

Almost 500 years ago, a young woman in Antwerp painted a self-portrait and signed it with a simple message: "I Catharina van Hemessen have painted myself / 1548 / Here aged 20." It was the first example of a self-portrait of an artist of any gender sitting at an easel. Although Hemessen bucked the trend and went on to become a court artist in Spain, few women of her generation ever made a living from painting professionally.

Nearly a century later, in 1633, 31 artists were accepted as members of the Haarlem Guild of Saint Luke. Membership enabled them to sell their work, open their own workshops and teach apprentices. Thirty of the guild's accepted artists were men, while only one was a woman: Judith Leyster. Though greatly acclaimed during her lifetime, Leyster was forgotten after her death, and until 1893, her paintings were presumed to be either by Frans Hals or her husband, Jan Miense Molenaer.

After centuries of suppression, when women had little or no access to any kind of artistic training, several reassessments are now being made, and one is by Jennifer Higgie in *The Mirror and the Palette*. An Australian novelist, screenwriter, critic and editor of the London-based magazine *Frieze*, Higgie interlaces biography with cultural and art history, telling stories of risk, endeavour, courage, resilience and creativity. The book explores women artists' self-portraits as they determined to express themselves artistically and usually had to fight against authority and tradition – because even though women have always made art, there has been almost constant obstruction from the state, the church, their own families and the public.

Hemessen, Leyster, Paula Modersohn-Becker, Amrita Sher-Gil, Sofonisba Anguissola, Gwen John, Nora Heysen, Suzanne Valadon and other extraordinary female artists who lived and worked from the 16th to the 20th centuries are all considered here. Their self-portraits are examined to uncover how and why they became – and remained – artists, and what their self-representation reveals about them and the times in which they lived. It's a lively and edifying read.

Susie Hodge, author of art history books including *The Short Story of Women Artists* (Laurence King)

YOU RECOMMEND

We asked our Twitter followers which history books captured their childhood imaginations...

@Tostig1066
I loved the Ladybird books on English monarchs – though I'm not sure the history was always sound...

@GrahamVincent91
Horrible Histories. If Terry Deary had illustrated the Irish curriculum's texts on tenant farming in the 19th century, I probably wouldn't have dropped the subject out of sheer boredom.

@TessaArlen
Everything by Rosemary Sutcliff: the Arthurian legends; *The Eagle of the Ninth* series. She was prolific and wrote wonderful historical novels.

@emily_llou
Where do I start! *Anne Frank's Diary, Last Train from Kummersdorf, The Night Watch, Goodnight Mr Tom*!

@Carolin35224088
At the local library I discovered a book about medieval Britain. It showed people emptying buckets into the street from windows and aspects of the Black Death. The carts piled up with corpses! Calligraphy! I loved it.

@locshar
1066 and All That made history funny and appealing. It fired up a lifelong interest in myriad historical figures.

@Seb_Falk
Rosemary Sutcliff, Robert Westall, anything with Robin Hood in it, and of course the Ladybird *Adventures from History* series by the one and only L du Garde Peach!

@lpeetea
Although they contain a few historical inaccuracies, the *Asterix* books made me curious about the Roman empire.

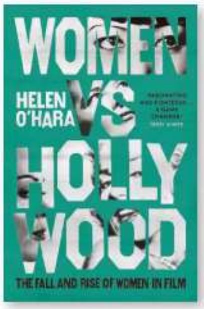
@_rebeccaandrew
Roald Dahl's autobiographies *Boy* and *Going Solo* stuck with me for a long time, although I'm sure I'd view them differently if I were to read them now.

@LadyWifeMe
My Friend Walter by Michael Morpurgo. I insisted on a visit to the Tower soon after, and have loved it ever since. My own children are now fans of it too!

CINEMA

Screen queens

AMY C CHAMBERS recommends a new title examining women in the film industry, and how their myriad achievements – both on and off-camera – have been sorely overlooked



Women vs Hollywood: The Fall and Rise of Women in Film
by Helen O'Hara
Little, Brown,
368 pages, £18.99

There is a battle going on in Hollywood; women directors are on the rise and they want Hollywood *back*. Film critic Helen O'Hara's newest book is part of a wave of women-written work uncovering the forgotten histories and triumphs of women filmmakers throughout film history. *Women vs Hollywood* tells a story that establishes women as long-term creators rather than just objects of the cinematic gaze. It explores the contributions of hidden figures of American cinema, such as Tressie Souders (the first black female director of a feature film), Lois Weber (one of the most prolific silent movie filmmakers), and Ida Lupino (one of the most prominent female directors in 1950s Hollywood).

O'Hara provides a detailed history of women's participation in the industry from Alice Guy-Blaché to Ava DuVernay, which leads into a series of thematic critical essays responding to Hollywood's lingering institutional misogyny. The stories of these pioneering women directors are well-researched and enthusiastically told here through archives, scholarship, and where possible, interviews with the women whose experiences are at the heart of this book.

> **Once filmmaking became accepted as both an art and profession, men were quick to erase the contributions of their female forebearers**

The historical chapters tell an infuriating tale that begins with the emergence of an industry where male dominance was not inevitable. Between 1907 and 1920, women were central to early cinema. If you remove their contributions, moving pictures might never have moved beyond the fairground. When filmmaking was an apparent frivolity, women made it theirs. But once filmmaking became accepted as both an art and profession, men were quick to erase the contributions of their female forebears.

The essays cover subjects including the male-dominated realm of classic film theory, and the development of the canon. The prevalence of the "male gaze" also comes under scrutiny – showing how most films have been made for a viewer assumed to be male. They also cover contemporary issues including #MeToo, equal pay and the challenges of improving diversity on and off-screen.

Helen O'Hara gives a much-needed perspective and her book could be split into two parts: women's history and feminist fury. *Women vs Hollywood* is a great introduction to the fight women have on their hands if they want to work in the movies. As O'Hara remarks: "The men of Hollywood find it hard to let go of privilege."

But time's up, gentlemen. Women have always been part of the story and now their voices are being heard. **H**

Through a new lens English-born director Ida Lupino instructs cast members on the set of her third feature film, *Outrage* (1950). Helen O'Hara's *Women vs Hollywood* shines a spotlight on a number of early women filmmakers

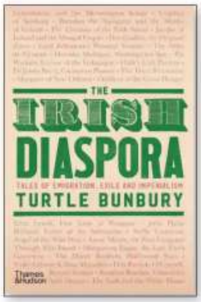
Amy C Chambers is a senior lecturer in film and media studies at the department of English at Manchester Metropolitan University

GETTY IMAGES

IRELAND

A global legacy

SEAN CONNOLLY praises an impeccably researched book that shows how Irish emigrants have made their mark on history



The Irish Diaspora: Tales of Emigration, Exile and Imperialism
by Turtle Bunbury
Thames & Hudson,
304 pages, £19.99

Ireland has long been a country of emigrants. In particular the 19th and 20th centuries saw a huge dispersal, with around 8 million leaving between 1800 and 1920 for new lives in Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the US. Most often the story of this diaspora is told as a collective history, with graphs and statistics illustrating the struggle of largely anonymous migrants and their descendants to make their way in a new society.

Turtle Bunbury, however, takes a different approach. He looks back much further, to the early Middle Ages, and concentrates on a selection of individuals who, in one way or another, achieved fame or notoriety. Some of his subjects are important historical actors, like John McKenna, a key figure in the Chilean war of independence, or Thomas D'Arcy McGee, the former revolutionary who became a cabinet minister in British North America and played an important part in its transformation into a federal Canada. Others had more specific achievements: Dublin-born John Field, who made his career in Moscow, is credited with developing a new musical form, the nocturne, while John Philip Holland, born in County Clare in 1841, gave his name to the US navy's first fleet of submarines, based on his designs. Others again were eccentrics, like Sir George Gore, who arrived on the American Prairies in 1854 with 50 servants, 50 hounds and three tonnes of ammunition, to embark on a three-year slaughter of local wildlife that horrified even the hunting-addicted society around him.

Submarine pioneer John Philip Holland is one of the many Irish emigrants profiled in Turtle Bunbury's book

ALEXANDER JAMES/GETTY IMAGES

Taken together, the 40 or so case histories highlight the variety of networks that, across the centuries, connected Ireland to a wider world. In the Middle Ages a strong tradition of monastic learning was a passport to courts and religious houses across Europe. Later, religious conflict drove priests and others to the Catholic powers on the continent, so that the Abbé de Firmont, who attended Louis XVI at the guillotine, had been born Henry Edgeworth of County Longford, a cousin of the novelist Maria.

More important still was the British empire. No fewer than seven viceroys of India were Irish-born, as well as numerous lesser officials. The army too provided careers for many, such as Field Marshal Hugh Gough, conqueror of the Punjab in two bloody wars between 1845 and 1849. Less creditably there was Richard Brew (c1725–76), born in the modest market town of Ennis, County Clare, and for a time the most successful slave-trader on Africa's west coast.

This fascinating assortment of case histories, spread across 1,400 years and six continents, is an impressive feat of research. All of the chapters are based on a solid body of up-to-date historical writing. The summaries of the often-complex historical background to the lives explored are models of lucid compression. The short biographies themselves are lively yet judicious, packed with vivid detail but willing, where necessary, to question or dismiss colourful legend. And the reader will come away with a new sense of the many ways in which Ireland has interacted with the world beyond its shores, and of some of the extraordinary careers that have resulted. **H**

Sean Connolly is professor emeritus of Irish history at Queen's University Belfast

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FROM FACT TO FICTION

In search of safety

Neema Shah on her novel set in 1970s Uganda, *Kololo Hill*

What can you tell us about the real events that inspired your novel?
In 1972, 80,000 Ugandan Asians were expelled from the country by Idi Amin and given 90 days to leave forever. Initially, most people thought the announcement was a joke. Ugandans were used to Amin changing laws on a whim. But it soon became apparent that the dictator and his army were deadly serious.

How did people react to the upheaval?
There was understandable anger and bewilderment, but in a country under military rule, fighting back was a dangerous option. Uganda was the only home many of these Asians had ever known. Now they were forced to leave homes and businesses behind, say goodbye to lifelong friends and see their families scattered across the world.

Lots of families came to the UK. What kind of reception did they receive?
Many who arrived in the UK as refugees had British passports through the country's colonial links, yet they had never visited before. Arriving in the midst of winter, the majority of the refugees were sheltered in former army barracks until they were able to secure housing and jobs. Though they faced racism and hostility from some, they were also greeted with kindness; some were taken in by ordinary British families who'd volunteered to help.

How is the story inspired by your own family history?
My grandmother told me about how she'd left India with a young baby during the Second World War, so that she could be reunited with my grandfather who'd gone ahead to Kenya. Together they established a home and a business. Decades later, my parents arrived in the UK clutching their own British passports, and once again, built new lives. All these stories have inspired my own.

Kololo Hill
By Neema Shah
(Picador, 352 pages, £14.99)

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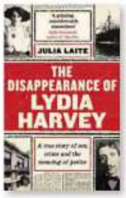
ALSO ON THE BOOKSHELF

WORDS BY **ELLIE CAWTHORNE** AND **MATT ELTON**

TRUE CRIME

The Disappearance of Lydia Harvey
by Julia Laite
(Profile Books, 432 pages, £16.99)



Witness for the prosecution

In 1910, Lydia Harvey stood up in court and caused a storm with a shocking testimony of trafficking and abuse. A major scandal ensued following media reports of how the young, working-class woman had been transported from her home in New Zealand to Buenos Aires and forced into sex work. Birkbeck historian Julia Laite traces Lydia's ordeal, and the moral panic about "white slavery" it fed into.

FICTION

A Fine Madness
by Alan Judd
(Simon & Schuster, 256 pages, £14.99)

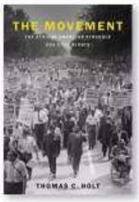
A FINE MADNESS
ALAN JUDD

Poet, playwright, student, spy

At the heart of this spy novel stands the mercurial, enigmatic figure of Christopher Marlowe, whose premature death in a tavern brawl has proven an enduring mystery. Alan Judd takes the idea that the playwright was drawn into the dangerous spy rings of Elizabethan England as his jumping off point, drawing on the real records of Marlowe's death and the secret service to craft a gripping story.

UNITED STATES

The Movement: The African American Struggle for Civil Rights
by Thomas C Holt
(OUP, 160 pages, £14.99)

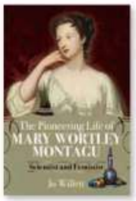


Strength in numbers

Thomas C Holt offers a succinct but nuanced overview of the origins, objectives and achievements of the civil rights movement. While a focus on towering figures such as Martin Luther King or Malcolm X has often shaped the narratives we tell about civil rights, Holt pays particular attention to the ordinary people and communities who took significant risks to make up the body of the movement.

BIOGRAPHY

The Pioneering Life of Mary Wortley Montagu: Scientist and Feminist
by Jo Willett
(Pen & Sword History, 232 pages, £25)



Inoculation innovator

Has there ever been a better time to celebrate the pioneers of vaccination? One such trailblazer was Mary Wortley Montagu, who popularised the process of inoculation in western Europe. Her efforts protected many from smallpox, starting with her own young daughter. And there's much more to Mary's story than just her medical record, including poetry, elopement and feminist writing.

FICTION

A Time for Swords
by Matthew Harffy
(Head of Zeus, 496 pages, £18.99)

MATTHEW
HARFFY
A TIME FOR
SWORDS

A holy avenger

Opening with its protagonist as an old man ruminating on the youthful decisions of his past, this historical novel then leaps back in time to AD 793, and the day on which Vikings reached the island monastery of Lindisfarne. The first instalment of a new series, this is gritty, gripping stuff, as a novice monk turns warrior to avenge the destruction, desecration and death wrought by the invaders.

SPACE

Beyond
by Stephen Walker
(William Collins, 512 pages, £20)

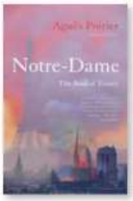
BEYOND
STEPHEN WALKER

Reaching for the stars

So dramatic are the events surrounding Yuri Gagarin becoming the first human to travel into outer space in April 1961, that this new book includes a note stressing the historicity of the incidents it describes. Drawing on new research and eyewitness testimony, Stephen Walker mixes screenplay-like dynamism with forensic detail to produce an account that captures a pivotal moment in time.

HERITAGE

Notre-Dame: The Soul of France
by Agnès Poirier
(Oneworld, 240 pages, £16.99)



Devotion and emotion

Agnès Poirier was at home in Paris in April 2019 when she saw curls of yellowish smoke heading skywards. The source, it soon emerged, was an inferno engulfing the medieval cathedral of Notre-Dame. Many people in France were left bereft. Taking this emotional reaction as her starting point, Poirier explores how Notre-Dame's history became interweaved with the life of the nation.

ARCHITECTURE

The Secret Life of the Modern House
by Dominic Bradbury
(Ilex Press, 352 pages, £26)

The Secret Life of the Modern House
Dominic Bradbury

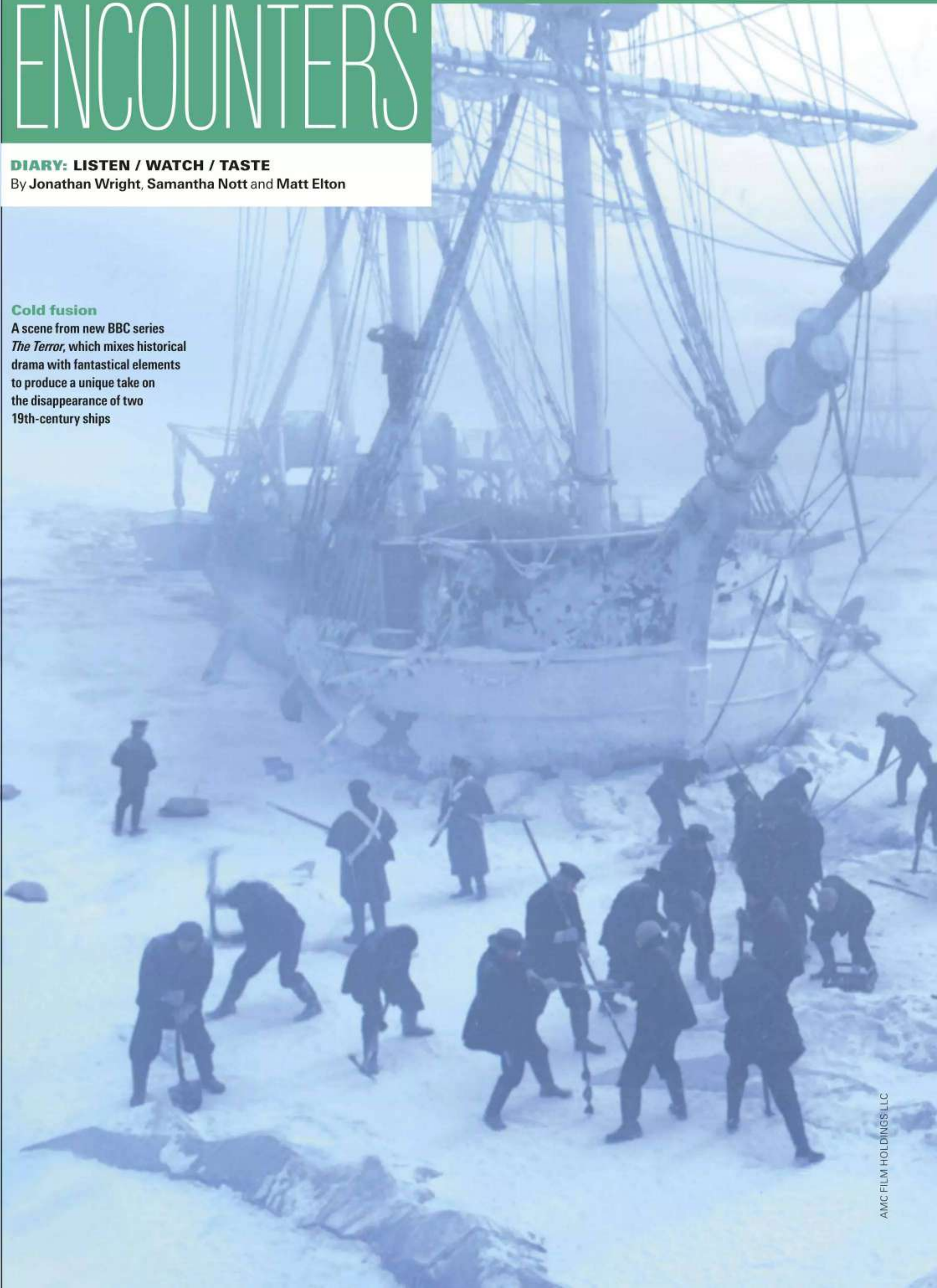
Interior lives

One of the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic has been, for many people, the need to exist almost entirely within a single space: the home. But what "home" means has varied across time, and this book explores the ideas that have transformed houses, and the lives within them, across centuries – from the Victorian semi to open-plan layouts and the increasing use of gleaming technology and glass. H

ENCOUNTERS

DIARY: LISTEN / WATCH / TASTE

By **Jonathan Wright**, **Samantha Nott** and **Matt Elton**



Cold fusion

A scene from new BBC series *The Terror*, which mixes historical drama with fantastical elements to produce a unique take on the disappearance of two 19th-century ships

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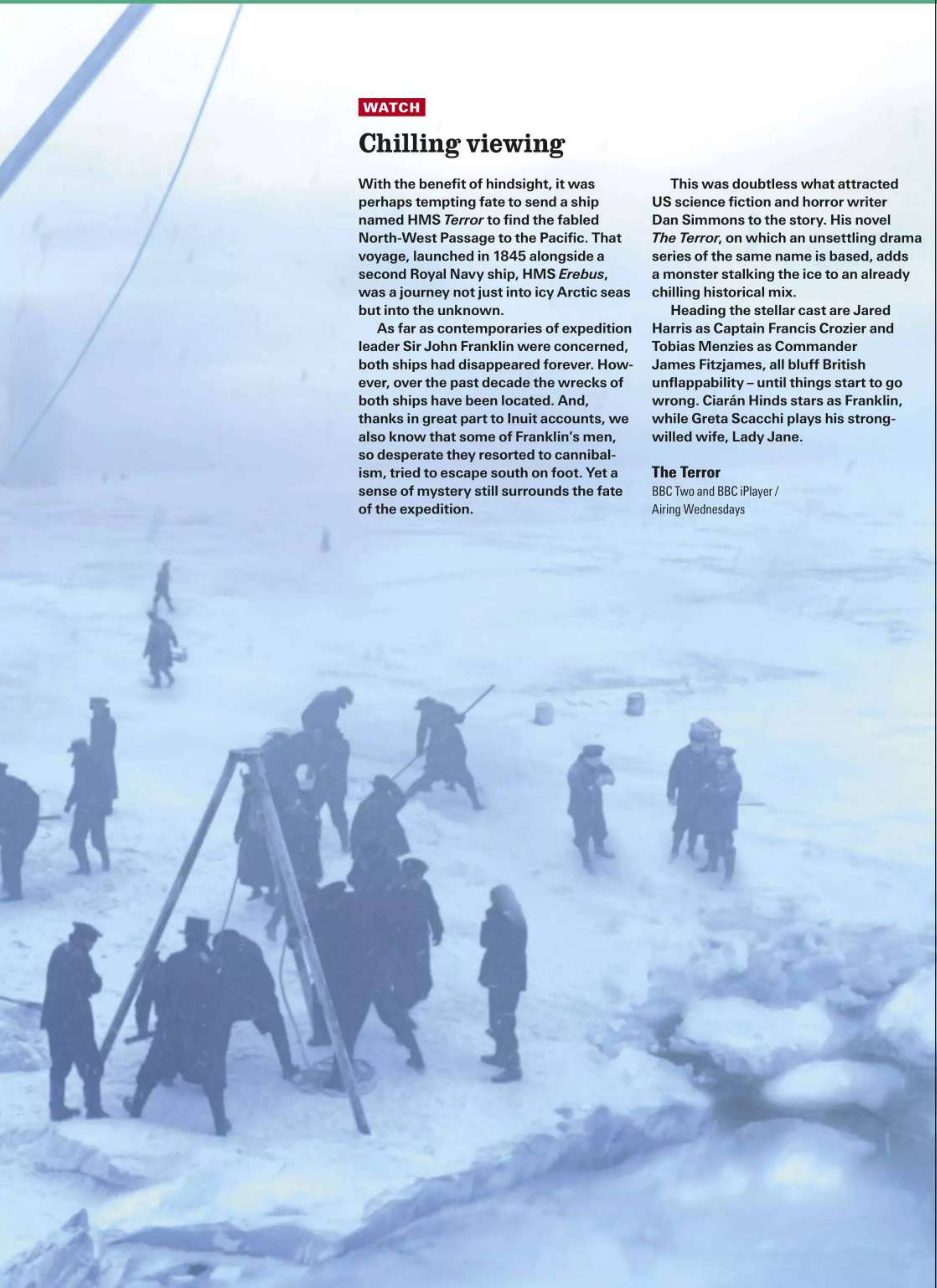


WATCH

Chilling viewing

With the benefit of hindsight, it was perhaps tempting fate to send a ship named HMS *Terror* to find the fabled North-West Passage to the Pacific. That voyage, launched in 1845 alongside a second Royal Navy ship, HMS *Erebus*, was a journey not just into icy Arctic seas but into the unknown.

As far as contemporaries of expedition leader Sir John Franklin were concerned, both ships had disappeared forever. However, over the past decade the wrecks of both ships have been located. And, thanks in great part to Inuit accounts, we also know that some of Franklin's men, so desperate they resorted to cannibalism, tried to escape south on foot. Yet a sense of mystery still surrounds the fate of the expedition.

This was doubtless what attracted US science fiction and horror writer Dan Simmons to the story. His novel *The Terror*, on which an unsettling drama series of the same name is based, adds a monster stalking the ice to an already chilling historical mix.

Heading the stellar cast are Jared Harris as Captain Francis Crozier and Tobias Menzies as Commander James Fitzjames, all bluff British unflappability – until things start to go wrong. Ciarán Hinds stars as Franklin, while Greta Scacchi plays his strong-willed wife, Lady Jane.

The Terror
BBC Two and BBC iPlayer /
Airing Wednesdays

LISTEN

The birth of Bangladesh

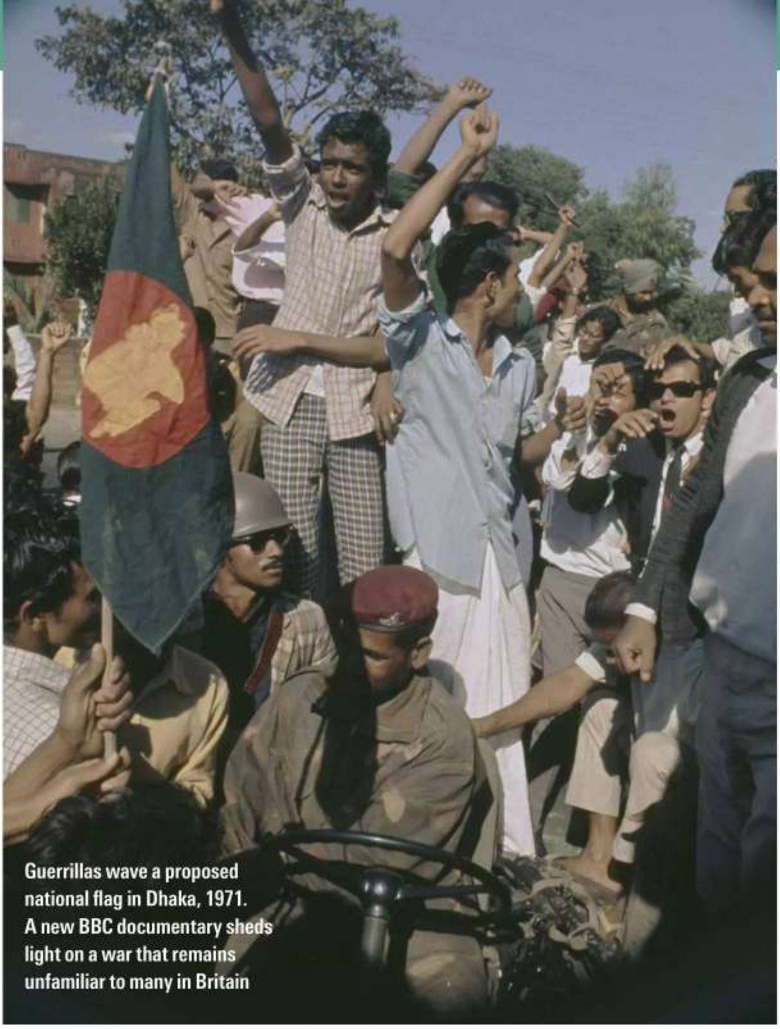
When it was created in 1947, the Dominion of Pakistan was a hybrid state encompassing two separate territories. Four provinces sat west of India, while the fifth, East Bengal (from 1956, East Pakistan), lay 1,000 miles away. Both parts had predominantly Muslim populations, yet were distinct not just geographically but culturally.

The tensions inherent in this situation eventually became too much. In March 1971, Pakistani state forces launched Operation Searchlight, an attempt to clamp down on calls for Bengali self-determination in East Pakistan. Nationalists there declared independence, sparking the Bangladesh War for Liberation – and were met by what many have described as genocide.

Half a century later, though it was fought in a country that now has the world's eighth-largest population, the bloody conflict is little remembered in the UK. That's all the more remarkable considering that the Bangladeshi community is one of the UK's youngest and fastest-growing ethnic groups. Now Qasa Alom, a BBC Asian network presenter with roots in Bangladesh, aims to bridge that knowledge gap. His documentary features a contribution from his great uncle, who fought in the war but has hitherto never spoken about his experiences. "The stories of Pakistan and India are often on the airwaves, but Bangladesh has been left out," Alom observes.

Bangladesh: Fifty Years of Independence and Ignorance

BBC Radio 4 / Expected to air Monday 29 March



Guerrillas wave a proposed national flag in Dhaka, 1971. A new BBC documentary sheds light on a war that remains unfamiliar to many in Britain

Martin Luther King, Jr, pictured in London in 1964. Footage of King's visit to the UK features in a forthcoming documentary

WATCH

Untold histories

Steve McQueen's extraordinary *Small Axe* film anthology highlighted stories of black Britons that should clearly be better known. So it's both timely and welcome that the BBC has commissioned two documentaries on topics explored in McQueen's films.

Black Power (BBC Two) looks at the roots of that movement in the UK, and features rare archive footage of Martin Luther King, Jr, Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael in Britain. It also sheds new light on the roles that British figures such as Altheia Jones-LeCointe, Darcus Howe and Roy Sawh played in the movement.

Subnormal (BBC One) explores how parents, teachers and activists worked together to expose the discrimination faced by many black schoolchildren, which had a devastating effect on the lives of their families.

Black Power and **Subnormal**

BBC One and BBC Two plus BBC iPlayer / March

GETTY IMAGES

Reconstruction Iron Age buildings at Butser Ancient Farm in Hampshire, among the sites featured in a look at how fire and fuel shaped human history

LISTEN

All fired up

Our need for energy, and the changing ways we've sourced and used it, has been a powerful driver in human history. That's the premise of a new four-part series from the BBC's chief environment correspondent, Justin Rowlatt.

He begins by exploring how our mastery of fire transformed our metabolism, as the unique ability to cook changed the way our bodies access the energy food provides. The second episode looks at what Rowlatt calls "the original solar energy revolution", when humans harnessed the power of the sun's rays to grow food. At Butser Ancient Farm in Hampshire, armed with a Stone Age mattock, he discovers that cultivating plants was hard work.

Subsequent programmes focus on fossil fuels and on the technological advances that are rapidly reducing the prices of both renewable energy and electric vehicles.

A Pyrotechnic History of Humanity
BBC Radio 4 / Expected to air Tuesday 30 March

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Visit *historyextra.com* for weekly updates on upcoming TV and radio programmes

ALAMY

HISTORY ON THE BOX

"Images featuring an idealised sense of beauty pervaded every aspect of Georgian society"

Historian **HANNAH WALLACE** tells us about one of the women featured in a new BBC Two series on the social history of beauty, glamour and make-up – and what her story reveals about the appearance-obsessed Georgian era

Your contribution to the series focuses largely on Georgiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire [1757–1806]. Who was she?
Georgiana Cavendish was one of the leaders of 18th-century society, and she really was put on this pedestal of beauty and grace. She played a huge part in influencing fashion but was also involved in politics and science. She was used, as celebrities are often used, to promote newspapers, clothing, even Wedgwood plant pots for people's gardens. She had the status of someone like Kim Kardashian.

How much money did she spend on her appearance?
Georgiana's hairdresser, Baptiste Gilbert, was one of the highest-paid servants in her London home. He was paid £52 10s, which is roughly the equivalent of £10,000 today. The fact that he was French brought an awful lot of kudos because he was trained in the ways of the French court and fashion, which were huge influences on British fashion at the time. It would have taken him, and perhaps another hairdresser or Georgiana's lady's maid, hours to produce these elaborate hair towers, and to decorate them with ostrich feathers, birds, fruits and even ships in sail. It must have been a huge job.

Gilbert had the income to be able to set up his own hairdressing salons. He had a hairdressing school and later went into business with another man to sell powder, and wigs and ribbons. He set up shops close to Devonshire House [in Piccadilly]. He was serving elite customers and trying to give a little sense of Georgiana's magic to a wider population. The rising middle classes were very interested in this.

How did she use her status?
She was a campaigner in the 1784 election for the Whig party. She was front of stage and wore foxtails in her hat as a show of support for [Britain's first foreign secretary] Charles James Fox. The depictions of her hairstyles and her fashion were all part of trying to draw a crowd to big political events. But this was also attacked by the media – her beauty and fashion became a double-edged sword.

How important was appearance in Georgian society more generally?
There was definitely an obsession with how people looked. Images of women such as Georgiana and an idealised sense of beauty pervaded every aspect of society. There was even a fear that, if the lower classes started to do these beauty regimes, then society wouldn't be able to tell who was an aristocratic woman and who was a servant. **H**

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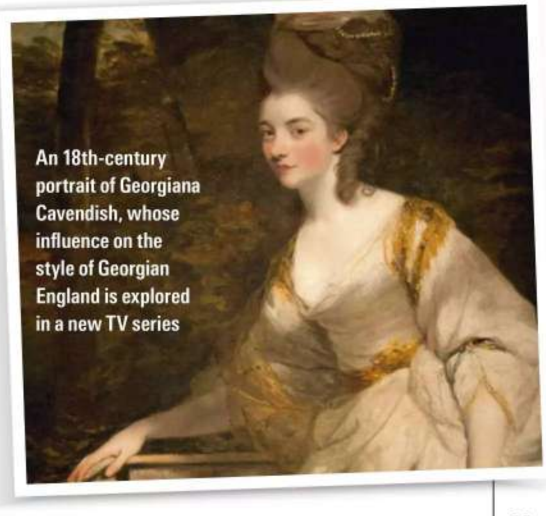
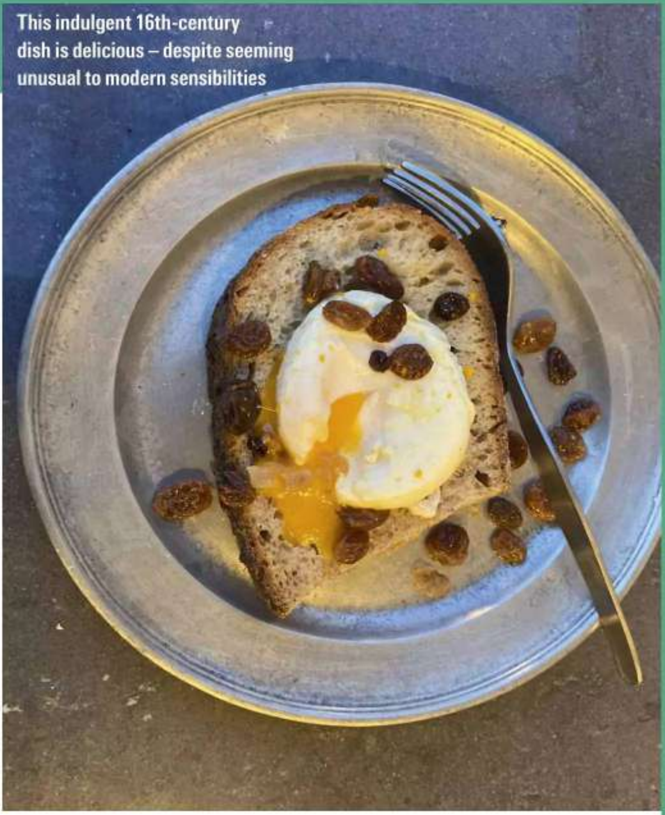
Dr Hannah Wallace is one of the experts who appears in **Powder, Paint, Poison** (title TBC), presented by make-up artist Lisa Eldridge and expected to air on BBC Two in early April


An 18th-century portrait of Georgiana Cavendish, whose influence on the style of Georgian England is explored in a new TV series

TASTE

Poached eggs in moonshine



This indulgent 16th-century dish is delicious – despite seeming unusual to modern sensibilities

To modern sensibilities more accustomed to savoury egg dishes, the idea of a breakfast of sweet alcoholic eggs might seem a little unpalatable – but such fare was common among the well-to-do of 16th and 17th-century England. Although we now associate the term "moonshine" with illicitly produced, powerfully alcoholic drinks, its use here denoted the use of sweet, aromatic but much milder alcohol. Indeed, in this modernised version the alcoholic component is very much optional. Regardless, this is a delicious and indulgent treat.

Difficulty: 2/10
Cooking time: 10–15 minutes

INGREDIENTS

Two to four eggs
115g currants or raisins
30g butter
Zest of half an orange
A pinch of ground nutmeg
220–450ml sweet white wine
Two to four slices of bread (for toast or "sippets")

METHOD

1. Combine the currants, white wine, nutmeg and orange zest in a small saucepan that will be deep enough in which to poach the eggs.

2. Bring the mixture to a boil over a medium to high heat. Boil until the currants are very plump, adding more liquid if it's needed.

3. Take the pan off the heat, add the butter and stir until it's melted.

4. Return the mixture to the heat and poach the eggs in it, one at a time.

5. Toast the slices of bread – or, for more authentic "sippets", warm them in an oven at a low heat (about 165°C) for 10 to 15 minutes, or until dry and crisp.

6. Dip the slices of toast into the sweet white wine.

7. Place the sweet poached eggs on top of the sippets or toast, and serve.

Recipe by Michael Walkden, Folger Shakespeare Library: bit.ly/3snLB2i

Stanislaw Chrzanowski, alleged to have acted as a Nazi collaborator in Belarus during the Second World War

LISTEN

A monster in exile?

Stanislaw Chrzanowski came to the UK to work as a machine operator in the wake of the Second World War. Known as "Mr Stan" in the Shropshire village of Hadley, where he lived in a retirement bungalow in his later years, Chrzanowski was a keen gardener and a familiar figure, zipping around on his mobility scooter.

Yet it seems all too likely that in the Belarusian town of Slonim, where the Nazis slaughtered as many as 10,000 Jews in a single day, Chrzanowski was known to his neighbours as a collaborator: an auxiliary policeman who committed war crimes – a "butcher".

That's the idea at the heart of a powerful documentary presented by journalist Nick Southall, which draws on the archive compiled by John Kingston, Chrzanowski's stepson. During his childhood, Kingston was allegedly told bedtime stories by Chrzanowski – tales that terrified him, and which later made him suspicious. Kingston, who died in 2018 after suffering from leukaemia, spent long hours researching his stepfather's life. The results make for a chilling story.

Chrzanowski, who himself died in 2017, aged 96, was never tried for his alleged crimes. The official line of British authorities is that, though he was investigated, there was insufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction. But, Southall asks, could there be another reason why he never faced justice? H

The Nazi Next Door
BBC Radio 4 / Expected to air Tuesday 23 March

SAMANTHA NOTT/ JOHN KINGSTON

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PRIZE CROSSWORD

Across

1 Greek name for Khufu, the Egyptian pharaoh thought to have commissioned the Great Pyramid of Giza (6)

4 Italian archbishop of Canterbury and trusted counsellor of William the Conqueror (8)

10 Australian city named after a 19th-century British Whig prime minister (9)

11 Jan ____, South African statesman who played an important role in the establishment of the League of Nations (5)

12 Oscar Wilde addressed his *De Profundis*, written in Reading Gaol, to his lover, "____" (Lord Alfred Douglas) (5)

13 Location of the Jewry Wall, one of the tallest surviving sections of a Roman wall in Britain (9)

14 The Assyrian king Ashurbanipal is noted for assembling the world's first systematically organised one (7)

16 Regent of Russia who, in 1689, was forced to step down in favour of her half-brother Peter I (6)

19 Seventeenth-century French philosopher and mathematician who developed one of the world's first mechanical calculators (6)

21 Ida ____, US investigative journalist whose *The History of the Standard Oil Company* (1904) hastened the breaking up of that company's monopoly (7)

23 Athenian dramatist, predecessor of Euripides and Sophocles, who transformed Greek tragedy with works such as *Oresteia* (9)

25 ____ Brooke Taussig (pictured), 20th-century US cardiologist celebrated for her work on "blue baby" syndrome (5)

27 Fourteenth-century grand prince of Moscow whose financial acumen earned him the nickname "Moneybag" (4,1)

28 Stuart monarch much influenced by her confidante, Sarah Churchill, until their bitter falling out (5,4)

29 A successful operation by the British to take this ridge in June 1917 was a prelude to the battle of Passchendaele (8)

30 Friedrich ____, German socialist philosopher who worked with Karl Marx (6)

Down

1 Malcolm and Donald ____, 20th-century father-and-son speed record-breakers (8)

2 Between 1892 and 1924, millions of immigrants to America passed through the processing station at ____ Island, New York (5)

3 The ____ system, a model of the universe with Earth at its centre, is named after the Alexandrian astronomer who formulated it (9)

5 Name, as spelled in Latin, of two Byzantine emperors of the Comnenus family in the 11th and 12th centuries (7)

6 Roman road linking Exeter to Lincoln (5)

7 Historical region of south-west France ruled by England's kings from 1154 to the end of the Hundred Years' War (9)

8 ____ Borgia, cited by Machiavelli as an example of a "prince" (6)

9 Popular Victorian novel by George du Maurier, the stage adaptation of which lent its name to a style of men's hat (6)

15 Celebrated series of railway timetables and guidebooks launched by a 19th-century English cartographer (9)

17 Major classical Greek monument in Athens, considered to be the culmination of the Doric order (9)

18 "____ Mare", a derogatory nickname for Anne of Cleves that's often attributed to Henry VIII but was probably coined later (8)

20 René ____, French jewellery designer prominent in the Art Nouveau movement, now best known for his Art Deco glassware (7)

21 Traditional canopy, often ornate, over a tomb or, especially, a four-poster bed (6)

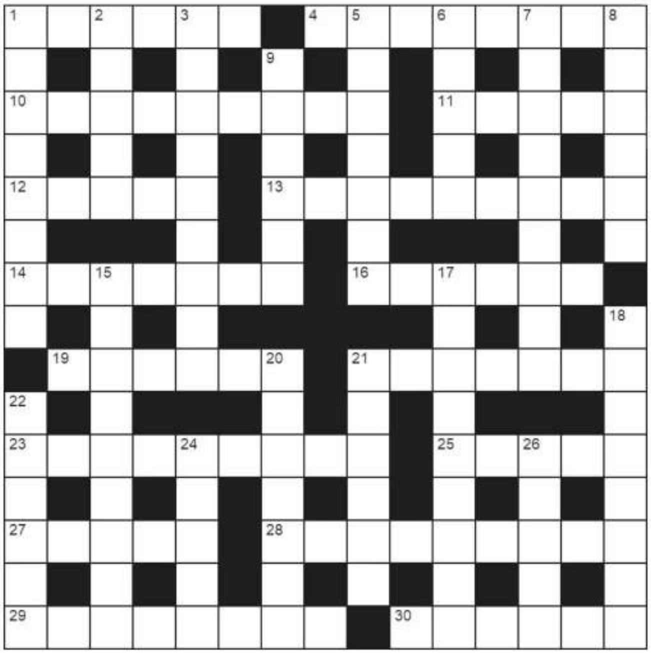
22 Radioactive element named by Marie and Pierre Curie, who discovered it in 1898 (6)

24 Republic on the island of Hispaniola that gained its independence in 1804 following a revolution by self-liberated slaves (5)

26 Dorothea ____, US documentary photographer whose portraits of displaced farmers during the Great Depression influenced future photojournalism (5)

……

Compiled by **Eddie James**



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● Open to residents of the UK (& Channel Islands). Post entries to ***BBC History Magazine*, April 2021 Crossword, PO Box 501, Leicester LE94 0AA** or email them to ***april2021@historycomps.co.uk*** by 5pm on **14 April 2021**. ● Entrants must supply full name, address and phone number. The winners will be the first correct entries drawn at random after the closing time. Winners' names will appear in the June 2021 issue. By entering, participants agree to be bound by the terms and conditions shown in full in the box below. Immediate Media Company Ltd (publishers of *BBC History Magazine*) will use personal details in accordance with the Immediate Privacy Policy at *immediatemedia.co.uk/privacy-policy/privacy/* ● Immediate Media Company Ltd (publishers of *BBC History Magazine*) would love to send you newsletters, together with special offers and other promotions. If you would not like to receive these, please write 'NO INFO' on your entry.
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Solution to our February 2021 crossword

Across 1 Chomsky 5 Sallust 10 Alliance 11 Novium 12 Uruk 13 Slave trade 14 My Lai 16 Empire 19 Baffin 20 Baker 22 Jethro Tull 25 INLA 26 Actium 27 Tenzing 28 Mazzini 29 Channel
Down 2 Hilary 3 Mein Kampf 4 Kings 6 Annie Peck 7 Lever 8 Saunders 9 Benazir Bhutto 15 Lindow Man 17 Partition 18 Valencia 21 Plague 23 Heinz 24 Lynch

Five winners of *Sapiens: A Graphic History*:
S Shurman, Herefordshire; J Newbury, Wiltshire; P Clarke, Oxfordshire; A Broughton, Suffolk; S Glover, Aberdeenshire

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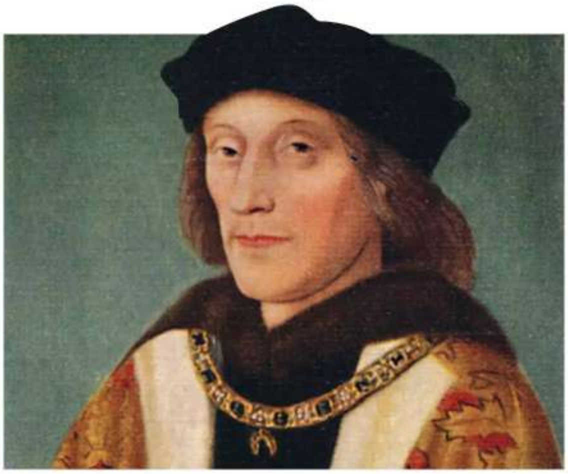

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NEXT MONTH

May issue on sale 15 April 2021

Operation Barbarossa

Jonathan Dimbleby reflects on the titanic clash between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union

The man who would be king

Helen Carr revisits John of Gaunt's doomed attempt to seize the crown of Castile in the 14th century

WELCOME PILGRIM
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Slimming clubs

Katrina Moseley on how losing weight became a social activity in the mid-20th century

Marcus Aurelius

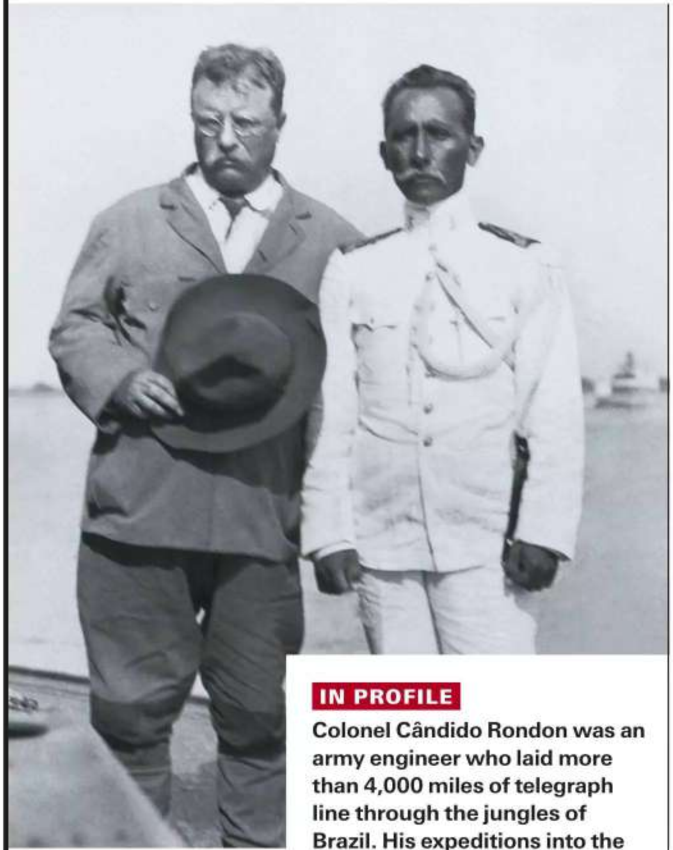
Shushma Malik examines the life and career of one of the most feted Roman emperors

Ella Al-Shamahi, explorer and evolutionary biologist, chooses

Cândido Rondon

1865–1958

Ella Al-Shamahi presents *Jungle Mystery: Lost Kingdoms of the Amazon*, available via All4. Her new book, *The Handshake: A Gripping History*, is published by Profile Books in March – see our review on page 85



Former US president Theodore Roosevelt stands on a boat with Cândido Rondon during the famous Roosevelt-Rondon scientific expedition, 1913–14

IN PROFILE

Colonel Cândido Rondon was an army engineer who laid more than 4,000 miles of telegraph line through the jungles of Brazil. His expeditions into the Amazon included exploring the Western Amazon Basin, but his most famous was the Roosevelt–Rondon scientific expedition in 1913–14. In 1910, he was appointed the director of the Indian Protection Service (SPI). He encouraged the later creation of the Xingu National Park, a territory where both indigenous people and the environment are protected. In Brazil, Rondon is a national hero, and the state of Rondônia is named after him.

> Cândido Rondon was as important as Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. But nobody outside of Brazil really knows about him

How did you first hear about Cândido Rondon?

It was through reading about different explorers. What jumped out about Rondon was that he was part-indigenous – technically, mostly indigenous – and an explorer. That combination was seen as so unusual.

What kind of person was he?

He was a naturalist, he was a scientist, he was an anthropologist. He was *the* Amazon explorer. He once got shot with an arrow and forbade anyone from returning fire because his belief, which was a paradigm shift at the time, was that you approach indigenous people peacefully. It's mad to think that an army colonel was essentially a pacifist! His motto was, "die if necessary but never kill".

What made him a hero?

Some people have said that, in the last century, there were three key nonviolent activists. One was Martin Luther King, Jr; one was Gandhi; and Rondon was the third. Yet nobody outside Brazil really knows about him. I think one of the reasons is that he does not fulfil the [white explorer] narrative for us westerners.

His most famous expedition was one that he did with Teddy Roosevelt [surveying the path of the Rio da Dúvida]. In the American press, it was described as Theodore Roosevelt's expedition. But this was part of a multi-decade project that Rondon was heading up, where he was placing thousands of miles of telegraph in the Amazon. Roosevelt almost died multiple times. At the end, Rondon literally dropped Roosevelt and his American colleagues off, like a bunch of celebrities, turned around and went back into the Amazon.

What was Rondon's finest hour?

It was when he served as the first director of the Indian Protection Service (SPI) [*Serviço de Proteção aos Índios*]. This was the predecessor to FUNAI [*Fundação Nacional do Índio*], the governmental organisation that protects the rights of indigenous people in Brazil.

Is there anything about him that you find difficult?

There is the question of whether he should have communicated with uncontacted people at all. Certainly today, we would not do that as it would be potentially disastrous for them.

If you could ask him one question, what would it be?

How do you solve what we're looking at right now? Indigenous people are often the best protectors of their lands, and yet the Amazon is being trashed, people are being killed and trees cut down. I wonder if his ideas and compromises would actually be more workable than other people's. **H**

Ella Al-Shamahi was talking to Jonathan Wright

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Men of No 83 Squadron are all smiles as they pass a Handley Page Hampden bomber at RAF Scampton, Lincolnshire, October 1940

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